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I N Q U I R Y;

WHEREIN;

The END and DESIGN of BAPTISM—The QUALIFICATIONS for it—The EXTENT of its administration—The ADVANTAGES arising from it—The STANDING of baptized Children—Whether Baptism in infancy do ENTITLE to CHURCH PRIVILEGES in ADULT YEARS—And the DISCIPLINE which the CHURCH is to exercise, relative to BAPTIZED CHILDREN, are particularly considered and illustrated.



By CYPRIAN STRONG, A. M.  
PASTOR OF THE FIRST CHURCH IN CHATHAM.



*It shall be a TOKEN of the Covenant betwixt ME and YOU.*

Gen. xvii. 11.

*The children of the FLESH these are NOT the children of GOD :  
but, the children of the PROMISE are counted for the SEED.*

Rom. ix. viii.

*Think not to say within yourselves, we have ABRAHAM to our FATHER.*

Math. iii. ix.



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## INTRODUCTION.



THE scheme of religion which the gospel contains, is so reasonable in its nature and so consonant to the dictates of natural conscience, that most men, who have enjoyed the gospel revelation, have felt greater or less obligations to pay attention to it. But then, the *external* part of religion has been sought, with much greater *avidity* than the *life* and *power* of it. This was a conspicuous *trait* in the character of the Jews, when our Saviour appeared among them : and it has been observable, in the religious character of every nation, which has enjoyed the gospel, since that time. And among all the *externals* of religion, *baptism* hath obtained the highest rank. An *enthusiasm*, bordering on *frenzy*, hath prevailed relative to it, even by those, who have neglected, or, at least, have treated with a great degree of indifference, almost every other institution of the christian religion.

BUT, notwithstanding the ordinance of baptism has been distinguished, as the *darling* institution, and hath obtained such a *singular* share in the attention of the christian world, there is scarcely a subject, which relates to religion, concerning which there hath been such a diversity of opinions. Particularly, relative to the *subjects*, *nature* and *extent* of the institution,—the *advantages* attending its administration, relative to infants,—and, that *discipline* which the church is to exercise respecting them. Some have considered, both *adults* and *infants*, as being the proper subjects of it, while others have confined it to

adults. Some have considered the children of believers, as the alone proper subjects of baptism; but others have extended it to *all* children, without distinction, that are born under gospel light. Some have supposed, that baptism was designed, as a *seal* of a covenant relation to God, both as it respects the *adult and infant*; and that it forms complete membership in the church, relative to both: and, by some it hath been considered as *essentially* requisite to salvation; while, on the other hand, in each of these respects, others have thought very differently. Finally, there hath been as great a diversity of opinions, respecting the *discipline* which the church is to exercise, relative to baptized children, as about any thing, which relates to the ordinance of baptism.

AN inquiry, both interesting and important, will naturally arise, from the foregoing considerations; viz. Is it because no *consistent scheme* is contained in the bible, that there has been, such a diversity of sentiments relative to baptism, in the respects which have been mentioned? Hath not God exhibited, in his word, a *consistent scheme*, relative to *baptism* and its *connections*?—The design of the following sections is to show, that such a scheme is exhibited in the sacred scriptures, and to point it out. In prosecuting this design, it is proposed to inquire,

I. INTO the *nature, end and design* of baptism,—of *infant baptism* in particular.

II. WHAT *that* is, which qualifies an infant for and renders it a proper *subject* of baptism.

III. How far divine institution extends the *right* of infant baptism.

IV. INTO the *advantages* arising from it.

V. INTO the *standing* of baptized children, as such, respecting the church.

VI. WHETHER baptism in infancy do, of itself, give a right to christian privileges, in adult years.

VII. INTO the nature of that *discipline*, which is

to be exercised in the Church, relative to baptized children.

IN attending to these inquiries, the writer has it in view, not only to illustrate the nature and original design of the ordinance of infant baptism, but to vindicate the divine right of it. His original motive, in undertaking to pursue the above proposed inquiries, was, the satisfaction of his own mind, amidst the confusion, which was occasioned by the clashing opinions of others. He is sensible, that he is liable to be taxed with *presumption* for *publishing* on subjects, which have already employed the pens of men of much more distinguished abilities and eminence than he can pretend to; yet he hopes, that when the obvious *necessity* of further light, on those important subjects is considered; and, that this attempt may be the occasion of calling forth the efforts of more able writers, it will be thought a sufficient apology.

If the writer hath presumed at any time to walk in an unfrequented path, he hopes, that what he has advanced will not be rejected, on account of its *novelty*; but be favoured with due attention and candour; especially if it be found consistent with the sacred scriptures.

WHETHER that which is advanced, in the following sections, be calculated, in any measure, to answer the end proposed by the writer, must be determined by those, who are willing to spend time and to be at the pains of perusing them.





## SECTION I.

*Wherein the Nature, End and Design of Baptism, particularly of Infant-Baptism are considered.*

**I**T has been taken for granted, very generally, if not universally, that baptism, as it respects an adult, is designed as a token or public mark of his being in covenant with God; or of his interest in the blessings of the covenant of grace. It has also been supposed, that infant-baptism is designed to signify the same thing, respecting the baptized child. The general idea of the end and design of baptism may be comprehended in the following definition of it; namely, "*A pledge or seal of a COVENANT TRANSACTION, which has already taken place, between GOD and the baptized, whether an adult or infant.*" The covenant respected in this definition of baptism, has always been supposed to be the covenant of grace: and it is also supposed that there are covenant transactions, respecting the infant baptized, as well as the adult, actually existing at the time of baptism. The interest which the children of believers have in, on their relation to the covenant of grace has been very generally, considered as *that* which constitutes the propriety of their being baptized. On this ground and with this idea of infant-baptism, the practice has been defended. HENCE it is, that many have considered baptized children, as having a right to *all* the privileges of the church, and as enjoying a *complete* standing in it, without any covenant transactions in adult years. Some have even supposed, that they have a title, by the promise of God, to regenerating grace

here and to glory hereafter. I see not, why all these things will not follow, as necessary consequences, if it be true, that the children of believers, as such, are to be considered as having an interest in the covenant of grace, and are to be baptized in *token* of such an interest; for the covenant itself does secure and confer grace here and glory in the coming world. But be this as it may, it is certain, that an interest in the covenant, respecting the *natural* seed of believers, has been considered as *that* which constitutes the propriety of infant baptism.

It is worthy of observation in this place, that the principal objections, which *Antipedo baptists* have urged against the practice of infant-baptism, have been levelled against the *covenant-standing* of the children of believers. They consider faith as the condition of an interest in the covenant; and that faith is *personal* and cannot take place by proxy—That infants are incapable of exercising faith, and that there is no evidence of it, if they do.—The opposers of infant-baptism do indeed reject the idea, that the Abrahamic-covenant was the covenant of grace; but the most distinguished writers, have bent their chief force, against the covenant-standing of the *natural* offspring of believers. This will appear by the following quotation from Dr. Gill, one of the most eminent opposers of infant baptism. Says he, “ That the covenant of grace was “ made with Abraham, or a revelation and “ application of it to him; that the gospel was revealed “ to him, and he was justified in the same way that “ believers are now; and that he had spiritual promises made to him, and spiritual blessings bestowed “ on him; and that gospel believers, be they Jews “ or Gentiles, who are the spiritual seed of Abraham, “ are heirs of the same covenant-blessings and promises are never denied. What is denied and “ should be proved is, that the covenant of grace is “ made with Abraham’s carnal seed, the Jews, and “ with the carnal seed of gospel-believers among

“the Gentiles, &c.\*” The covenant standing of the natural seed of believers, has been considered, both by the advocates and opposers of the practice of infant baptism, as the great pillar and corner stone which supports it.

THAT baptism, as it respects an *adult*, is designed, as a token of *his* covenant relation to God, is agreed to by all parties. I see no reason to question it, but great reason to believe it.

As to the children or *natural* offspring of believers, altho’ I am firmly persuaded, that they are the proper subjects of baptism, yet, I apprehend there is great reason to question, whether the institution be at all founded, on the idea of their being *in covenant*; yea, whether there be any such covenant relation existing.

THE idea, which the sacred scriptures teach us to entertain of baptism, as it respects an adult believer and his children, is this: *That the whole is one simple transaction, and designed to signify, that the believer or parent, who alone is active in the dedication, does keep covenant, or is in covenant with God.* Not that it is a *token*, that the *parent* who dedicates, and also, that the *child* which is dedicated is in covenant; but that the *parent* himself is in covenant. What God requires of man, as his part or condition of the covenant is, that he dedicate himself and all that he hath to God. The dedication of his children as well as of himself, comes into the very nature of his covenant: and, that he doth dedicate himself and children is signified and indicated, by his offering himself and children in baptism. It is observable, that Abraham’s being directed to circumcise himself and the males, which belonged to him, was to explain the *extent* of that injunction and command, which God had just laid upon him: “*Thou shalt keep my covenant;*” and so the whole transaction was designed, as a *token*

\* Gill’s reply to Mr. Peter Clark, p. 35.

that he did so. And hence, after Abraham was directed to circumcise himself and those children which belonged to him, God said—“*And it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.*” Gen. xvii. 11. That this is the scriptural idea of baptism, is what will be particularly considered hereafter. It will be universally agreed in, that the baptism of an adult, is designed as a token of his covenant relation to God. That the baptism of his children is designed to signify the same thing is what some, at least, will object to; and those, who object to that idea of infant baptism, will insist on its being designed to signify, that the child baptized is in covenant. But, I apprehend, that there is, the most solid reason to doubt, whether baptism, as it respects *infants*, were ever designed to signify *their* covenant relation to God; yea, whether the *natural seed* of believers, as such, are, in any proper sense of the word, in covenant. That they are not, and that infant baptism doth not suppose or imply it, appears to me, however it may appear to others, capable of scripture demonstration.—This is what I shall attempt to make appear, in the remaining part of this section.

BUT previously to my attempting this, it will be necessary to consider, what is intended by being *in covenant*; and in what sense it is meant to be denied, that the *natural seed* of believers are in covenant and that baptism, as it respects infants, supposes or signifies a covenant relation to God.

ALTHOUGH so great a stress hath been laid on the covenant-standing of the children of believers, that it has been considered, as the foundation principle, on which the institution of infant-baptism rests, yet I do not find, that the advocates for it, have ever clearly explained, what is intended by it; or how far and in what sense such children are to be considered as being *in covenant*. That they are in covenant, and that their covenant standing doth depend upon and originate from their being the children of covenant parents, as the *term* and *condition*, hath been abun-

dantly asserted ; but the precise idea which is to be entertained of being *in covenant*, as it respects the *natural* seed of believers, I do not find clearly expressed, by any writer on the subject.

HOWEVER, one thing which must be intended, when it is said, that the *natural seed* of believers are in covenant, must be this, that they have a *present* standing in the covenant, on the sole condition of their being the children of believing parents. If it were only intended, that such children may, hereafter, have an interest in the covenant, on some conditions which are not implied in being the children of believing parents, it would follow, that they are not in covenant as being the children of such parents—that, at present, they have not a *real* but only a *possible* title to the covenant ; which would be placing such children on the same ground, respecting the covenant, with other children ; for the children of *unbelievers* may have a standing in the covenant on certain conditions. When it is said, therefore, that the children of believers are in covenant, it must mean, that such children have a present standing in it, upon the sole condition of their being the children of believing parents. If this be not the case, but something over and above *that* be necessary, it cannot be said with any propriety, that the children of believers, as such, are in covenant. But, that being the children of believers is a condition on which an interest in the covenant of grace is secured, is what, I apprehend the scriptures do not teach us.

I WOULD further inquire here, what is *that* covenant standing ;—what is implied in it, and what blessings are secured by it ?

If by way of reply it should be said, that what is intended by being in covenant is, that such children are under the *bonds* of the covenant ; or are under *obligations* to do the *duties* of the covenant, or the duties which are prescribed in the gospel, that would by no means imply, that they are *in* covenant, in distinction from other children ; for all children, yea all men,

good and bad, are under obligations to do the *duties* which the gospel enjoins, as soon as they are capable of understanding them. We cannot suppose, that the children of believers *only* are under obligations to believe, and to be "holy in all manner of conversation." If all that is meant, therefore, by the children of believers being in covenant be this, that they are under obligations to do the duties which the gospel, or covenant enjoins, then they are not in covenant in distinction from all other children; nor in distinction from the vilest profligate.

BEING in covenant must certainly imply, something more than being under *obligations* to do, or practise the duties of religion. When we speak of a believer, as being in covenant, we mean something more, than that he is under *obligations* to be holy; we mean to assert, that he has a *title* to certain blessings. If no more be meant by being in covenant, than being under obligations to be a holy people, then it may be said, that all children and all men, be they who they will, are in covenant.

THE inquiry then, what is intended, when it is said that the children or *natural seed* of believers are in covenant, still remains unanswered, if any thing important or discriminating be intended. And I can conceive of no answer which can be given, excepting the following; namely, *That such children have a covenant title to the blessings, which God promises and secures in the covenant of grace.* If the conditions of the covenant be fulfilled, on their part, then they have a *full* title to the promises, on God's part: but if the conditions of the covenant be not fulfilled, they have no title to the blessings of the covenant, in any sense. And if God have not secured to them the blessings of the covenant, and have not given himself to them, to be their God, then they have no interest in the covenant. And, if God have not given himself to such children, on the *condition* of their being the *natural seed* of believers, then then they are not in cove-

nant. When it is said, therefore, that the *natural* seed of believers are in covenant, it must mean, that they do enjoy a *title* to the blessings of the covenant ; and so, that God is their God, by full covenant ; and that upon this condition only, that they are the *natural* seed of believing parents. Saying, that their title is not *absolute*, but depends upon some *other* condition than their being the *natural* seed of believing parents, is to say, that they have no title, merely as the children of believing parents. That no such title doth in reality exist, is what I mean to make appear, from the sacred scriptures.

It may be said here, that those who advocate the covenant standing of the children of believers, do not mean or intend, that such children have an *absolute* title to the *great and most important* blessings of the covenant of grace ;—what they mean is, that they are so interested in the covenant, as that the *external* blessings of it are secured to them.

WHAT we are to understand by *external* blessings, in distinction from *internal*, I conclude, must be the *external* means of grace ;—that such children have a *covenant security* of the means of grace ; but not a security of *grace* itself ; for if *grace* itself were secured, then every thing, both *internal* and *external* would be secured, which the covenant of grace ever bestows on mankind in this life.

WHEN it is said, that they have a *title* to *external* blessings, I conclude, the meaning must be this, that they enjoy more than those who have liberty to attend on means of grace ; that they are not only on a *level* with other children under the gospel, but that they have a *covenant title* to such external blessings ;—that God has *covenanted* to the children of believers, the *external* blessings of the covenant ; such as means of grace, &c.

ON the whole, the meaning of what is now urged is this, that God has, by covenant, secured to the *natural* seed of believers, the enjoyment of the means

of grace, but not *grace* itself; if *grace* were secured, then all blessings both *external* and *internal*, which appertain to the covenant of grace, and are experienced in this life, would be secured.

BUT if all this were admitted, as being in fact the case, could such children be said to have a standing in and title to the blessings of the new covenant; when the *great* and most important blessings of the covenant are left out of the question? If such children have a title to *external* means and blessings, and to nothing further, they will certainly perish, notwithstanding their present titles; yea, as to *that* which the covenant of grace *chiefly* respects, they are absolutely dependent upon the uncovenanted grace and mercy of God. Such children have, upon the present supposition, no kind of title to the *essential* and *distinguishing* blessings of the covenant of grace.

BESIDES, is it true, that God has, by any covenant, secured the *external* means of grace, to the natural seed of believers, as such? Would it be a breach of covenant and promise, if God should withhold, from such children, the enjoyment of the means of grace? May not God cut them off by death, in the time of their infancy, before they have been capable of enjoying such means? May he not send them into captivity among the heathen, without a breach of covenant or promise? Then he is not under any covenant, to bestow upon them such external blessings.

AND would it not be asserting too much, or more than is in reality true, if it should be said, that God has, by covenant, and promise, *secured* either to the children of believers, or even to believers themselves, the enjoyment of external means of grace? Does the *security* of those *external* means come into the idea of an *interest* in the covenant of grace? Believers themselves, I believe for myself, have no covenant security of those external blessings. God has promised and secured, by covenant, unto real believers, *real* good; yea the *biggest* good—that “all things shall work

together for good," respecting them ; but, as I conceive, he hath no where promised, that believers shall enjoy the ordinary external means of grace. And, in fact, believers are often cut off from the enjoyment of those external means. They are often cut off from such means, by sickness, captivity and in many other ways. The body of the Jews were deprived of the worship of God, according to divine institution—Their temple was destroyed—They were carried captive into a strange land. David, that man after God's own heart, was banished from the sanctuary and deprived of the favors which the sparrows enjoyed. But was there a breach of covenant on the part of God !

WE must, therefore, conclude, that God has not secured, by covenant, to the *natural* seed of believers the external means of grace. But if it were so, that he had, I see no propriety in saying, that they are *in covenant*, meaning the covenant of grace, when they have, upon that supposition, no *title* to the blessings which the covenant of grace *chiefly* respects. If we leave out the *essential* and *most important* blessings of the covenant, they must, indeed, be less than half-way members of the covenant.

PERHAPS it will here be said, that what is intended when it is urged, that the children of believers are *in covenant* is not, that they have a *real* and *absolute* title to the blessings of the covenant, but a *visible* title only.

BUT what is to be understood by a *visible* title, when opposed to a *real* title ? Is it, that they have an *apparent* title, when it does not *appear* that they have any title ? A *visible* title must mean, an *apparent, real* title. It must appear, that they have a *real* title, in order to their enjoying a title *visibly*. Admitting that the natural seed of believers have not, as such, a *real* and *absolute* title to the blessings of the covenant, is acknowledging that they have no title, unless it be one made *visible*, aside from the *scriptures* and in *opposition* to acknowledged fact.

ON the whole, I shall presume upon it, as being sufficiently evident, that if it be the case, that the children of believers, as such, have not a *real* title to the blessings of the covenant of grace, that they have not a *visible* one, unless the *visibleness* arise from some other source, than divine revelation : and also, that if there be not an *absolute* title, on the sole condition of being the children of believing parents, the title is not *real*.

WE cannot, therefore, conceive of any *important* meaning to the terms, *being in covenant—having a covenant title*, &c. except it be, enjoying a title to the *essential* blessings of the covenant of grace. And the children, or natural seed of believers, as such, cannot be said to be in covenant, unless on that very account, or as children of believers, they have a title to the *peculiar* and *essential* blessings of the new covenant. Saying, that such children have a covenant title to *external* blessings, such as the means of grace, &c. I trust appears, from what has been said, to be saying more than what is true, either respecting believers themselves or their children ; for, upon that supposition, God could not deprive either believers or their seed, of the enjoyment of such means, without breach of covenant : but God, in fact, does it. And, were such external means really secured by promise, it could not with propriety be said, that such children are in covenant, if the covenant of grace be respected ; for in reality they have not, upon that supposition, a title to the *special* and *peculiar* blessings of that covenant.—If the children of believers be in covenant at all, they are so in the same sense, that believers are themselves.—The passage, from whence the covenant title of children has been principally argued, is that promise made, Gen. xvii. 7. *And I will establish my covenant between me and thee—to be a God unto THEE and thy SEED after thee.* Now the promise is the same to the *seed* as it was to *Abraham* himself. If, therefore, his *natural seed* were meant by the term *seed*, their title to the blessings of the covenant was as *extensive* as the title of Abraham.

I SHALL now proceed to show, that infant-baptism doth not signify or imply, that the infant baptized is in covenant ; and, that no covenant title does exist relative to the *natural seed* of believers, as such ; but, that the baptism of a parent and his children, is designed to signify the same thing ; namely, that the parent doth comply with the covenant.

THOSE, who believe in the doctrine of infant-baptism, universally agree in it, that the design of baptism in the christian church, is essentially the same with circumcision in the Jewish : and consequently, that the *end and design* of the institution of *circumcision* will teach us, the *end and design* of *baptism*. By attending therefore, to the *end and design* of *circumcision*, we may obtain some proper views and ideas of the *end and design* of christian baptism.

WE have the institution of circumcision recorded at large, in Gen. xvii. 9—14. in the following words, “ *And God said unto Abraham, thou shalt keep my covenant, therefore, thou and thy seed after thee, in their generations. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy seed after thee ; every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man-child in your generations ; he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised : and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man-child, whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people ; he hath broken my covenant.*”

IN this account of the institution of circumcision, the attentive reader will remark, that the direction given to Abraham to circumcise himself and the males belonging to him, whether they were his own

natural offspring; or *born* in his house, &c. had one single object and design; namely, to signify that he did keep God's covenant. The account of the institution, it will be observed, begins in this manner. God said to Abraham, "*thou shalt keep my covenant.*" Then God informs Abraham, what he must do in order to his keeping his covenant. He must circumcise all his males. "*This is my covenant which ye shall keep, every man-child shall be circumcised.*" And then it is added. "*It shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.*" The whole transaction, in circumcising himself and his males, denoted one simple thing, namely, that Abraham did keep covenant. It is not said, and as I conceive it is not intimated, that it was to be a token of the covenant between God and his males. It is true, it is said, that his seed in their generations, or those who should come after him, should use the same sign, or signify, in the same way, that they would keep covenant with God. But, at the same time, it teaches us, that Abraham's circumcising his males was considered, as a *token* of his keeping covenant; and was absolutely necessary in this view of it. There is not the least intimation, in this whole account of the institution of circumcision, that Abraham's circumcising *himself* was to be considered as a token, that he was in covenant; and that his circumcising his *males* was to be a token that *they* were in covenant; for there is nothing mentioned, as being signified respecting the males; but the whole transaction was considered a *token* of Abraham's keeping God's covenant. The command was to keep God's covenant—then God tells him what the covenant was, viz. to circumcise himself and his males; and then it is said, "*it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.*" The whole affair and transaction was considered, as a *token* of the covenant betwixt God and Abraham; and the same practice was directed to be continued, in the same manner, by his successors, in their generations. It must then

be evident, that *dedication* alone was signified by the circumcision of *infants* ; and not any interest which *they* had in the covenant. Abraham could not be said to have kept or complied with the covenant of grace, unless he had, in fact, *dedicated* his children as well as himself to God. There was a propriety, therefore, in God's directing the token of circumcision to be applied to them, as well as to himself ; as they were next in his estimation. And, from the account given us, at the first institution of circumcision, we are under a necessity of concluding, that *dedication* only was signified by it, so far as infants were respected ; for it is not so much as hinted, that any thing was signified by the circumcision of children, *distinct* from the circumcision of the parent. But the whole transaction was expressly said to be a *token* of the covenant between God and Abraham.

It will probably be said, that in the 14th verse, the covenant-standing of the *children* of believers is very clearly held forth, at least by implication ; for therein God says to Abraham, "*The uncircumcised man-child, whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people : he hath broken my covenant.*" Here, in this verse, it will be said, the covenant standing of the children of believers is clearly held forth ; for in the case therein mentioned, of the uncircumcised man-child, it is expressly said, he hath broken the covenant.

By way of answer, I would observe ; that if any such thing can be infered from the verse under consideration, it is the *only* passage to be met with in the whole account given us of the *design* of circumcision, at its first institution, that has the *appearance* of holding up the covenant standing of the *natural* seed of believers.\* The whole preceding account, most evidently confined, the *token* to the covenant standing of the parent, or adult who dedicates : and I see no reason, why it is not to be considered, in the same manner in the verse under consideration. And so the

meaning be this ; that he, who shall not circumcise his man-child shall be cut off, &c. he hath broken my covenant, &c. Mr. POOL, in his annotations, considers it in this manner. And his reason for thus considering it is this. " That the Hebrew verb may be rendered actively : which seems best here ; because the punishment seems more justly to belong to the *parent*, who was guilty of this neglect, than to the *child*, who was not capable of this precept ; and, therefore not guilty of the violation of it." Another reason for adopting this sense of the passage is this, that it is perfectly agreeable to the preceding account of the transaction ; wherein it is considered, as having a sole respect to the covenant standing of the parent.

BUT the sense of the passage is put out of all reasonable doubt, as I apprehend, by what we find recorded in sacred writ ; and that by the practice which took place, on the precept contained in the very verse under consideration. The case mentioned in the verse actually happened ; and that in the family of *Moses*, the *leader* of God's people. And does not God's conduct, on that occasion, afford a most *full* and *decided* explanation of the passage under consideration ? Did God denounce any threatenings against the uncircumcised child ? did he seek to cut it off and to take away its life ? But on the contrary, was not the threatening levelled directly at *Moses*, the parent, in distinction from the child ? On account of this neglect it is said, "*That the Lord met him and sought to kill him.*" Exodus iv. 24. All the foregoing considerations, I apprehend, make it evident, that the breach of covenant, and the threatening, in the verse under consideration, has a direct respect to the *parent*, and not to the uncircumcised man-child.

ON the whole, I think we may fairly conclude, from the account given us of the *end* and *design* of circumcision, at its institution, that infant-circumcision was not designed to signify, any covenant relation that the *infant* had to God ; but was designed,

in conjunction with a *parents* own circumcision, to signify, that *he* complied with the covenant of God. The directions in Gen. xvii. 10—14. were designed, as an explanation of God's demand of Abraham, verse 9th, which was, that he should *keep* God's covenant; and from what follows, in verse 10th, and onward, we learn, that in order to his *keeping* it, he must circumcise his males, &c. And it is expressly said, that his doing thus, was to be a token of the covenant betwixt God and him.

BUT, that circumcision, as it respected infants, did not suppose and was not designed to signify, that the *infant* circumcised was in covenant with God, or had any part in the *essential* blessings of the covenant, made with Abraham, will further appear, from the following considerations.

I. As circumcision was actually extended to *such* children, as were *expressly* excluded and cut off from having an interest in the covenant and promises made to Abraham, so it is certain, from thence, that it was not designed to signify and did not imply, that circumcised infants had any interest or part in the covenant.

If it be a fact, that circumcision, by divine appointment, was to be administered to such infants, as were expressly *excluded* from the Abrahamic covenant, it becomes clear and evident, that it was not designed to signify an *interest* in the covenant, as it respected the circumcised child. And was not this, most manifestly the case, as to *Ishmael*, although he was Abraham's *natural* son? It is expressly said, that he had *no part* in the promises made to Abraham. That he did not belong to the *seed*, which the promises respected. See Gen. xvii. 19—24. *Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac; and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee. Behold, I have blessed him and will make him fruitful, and will multiply*

him, &c. BUT MY COVENANT WILL I ESTABLISH WITH ISAAC, *whom Sarah shall bear unto thee, &c.*

FROM this passage it is extremely evident, that Abraham really understood, that *Ishmael* was *excluded* from the covenant, and did not belong to the *seed* respected in it—that God, in the most explicit manner, informed Abraham, that it was really the case. Yet, God had directed Abraham to circumcise *Ishmael*, as well as his other males. Does this not make it evident, that the circumcision of infants was not designed, as a *token* of the covenant-standing of infants; yea, that it did not imply *any* interest in the covenant, respecting them? If any such thing were designed, would there not have been the highest impropriety, in Abraham's circumcising *Ishmael*? Can we conceive it possible that God would have directed Abraham to circumcise him, if he had designed it as a *token*, that the circumcised-child was in covenant, at the very time, when he *explicitly* informed Abraham, that *Ishmael* was *excluded* from the covenant? But, upon the supposition, that *dedication* only was signified by infant-circumcision, and so that the parent discharged his duty, there was the same propriety in Abraham's circumcising *Ishmael*, as in circumcising *Isaac*; for he was as *truly* Abraham's son as *Isaac* was, and equally at his disposal: and it was as necessary, in this view of the institution, for him to circumcise *Ishmael* as it was to circumcise *Isaac*.\*

\* If any should object to the fact, respecting *Ishmael*, on which this argument is founded, and say; although it be true, that antecedent to Abraham's application to GOD, on the behalf of *Ishmael*, he was not included in the covenant; yet, in consequence of his importunity, GOD was pleased to admit him, as appears from Gen. xvii. 18. 20—I say if any should offer such an objection—I would answer,

1. That although GOD promises certain things to *Ishmael*, in the passage referred to in the objection, yet it is certain they were not *such* things as implied, that he belonged to the *seed*, which the Abrahamic covenant respected; for, in the words immediately following those, wherein the blessings are enumerated, which GOD pronounced on *Ishmael*, in consequence of Abraham's importunity, it is said, "*But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear, &c.*" Which makes it evident, that *Ishmael*, after all, was not considered as being included in the covenant.—But,

It being the case, that God directed Abraham to circumcise such as were declared *not* to belong to the seed, which the covenant respected, and so, certainly were not in covenant, it becomes evident, that infant-circumcision was not designed to indicate, yea, did not suppose, that the infant circumcised was, in any proper sense of the word, in covenant.

II. THAT circumcision did not imply and was not designed to signify, that the circumcised-infant had an interest or standing in the covenant, further appears from hence; as the children of believers, after the flesh, were not considered as *heirs* of the promises made to Abraham; and yet, *all* the children and *natural* seed of believers were to be circumcised.

If it be really the case, that the *natural* seed of believers were not considered as being heirs of the covenant, and yet all such children were to be circumcised, it must be evident, that the circumcision of infants was not designed to indicate, or signify, any covenant relation they were in to God. And are not each of these things obviously taught, in the sacred scriptures?

As to the children of Abraham, those who were his *natural* seed, or were *born* in his house or *bought* with

2. If every thing set up in the objection were admitted, it would not, in the least weaken the argument. It is granted, in the objection, that antecedent to Abraham's importuning God, *Ishmael* was excluded from the covenant; yet, this was after God had directed Abraham to circumcise *all* that were born in his house, &c. The command to circumcise *Ishmael*, therefore, did not respect him as being in covenant; because Abraham was commanded to circumcise him, antecedently to his being supposed to be in covenant, even by the objector himself.

Some have supposed, that if it be evident, that *Ishmael* was finally in covenant, and died a good man, it militates against the present argument. But if that were an established fact, I conceive, it would not in the least alter the conclusiveness of the argument. What was designed by the argument was this, to show, that the *natural* seed of believers, as such, are not in covenant, and so not to be circumcised or baptized, in token of it. They may become interested in the covenant, at any time, by becoming believers. I am not in the least disposed to controvert, whether *Ishmael*, in any after period of his life, became a believer, and so *personally* interested in the *essential* blessings, which were given to his father Abraham. It is sufficient for the present argument, that he was not *at the time* of his circumcision; nor as being a natural son of Abraham.

his money, or in any proper sense *belonged* to him, the institution is express in it, that they were to be circumcised. Not only *Isaac*, the child of promise and heir of the covenant, but *Ishmael*, the son of the bond-woman, was to be circumcised. So all the males, which were under his *control* and were at his *disposal*, were subjects of that ordinance. It cannot, therefore, be a matter of doubt, whether *all* the children of Abraham, according to the flesh, were to be circumcised.

AND, is it not equally evident, that the children of believers, after the flesh, were not considered as the children of God and interested in the promises, which were made to Abraham? Let us attend to the account, which the apostle Paul gives us of this matter, Rom. ix. 6—8. His words are these “*For they are not all Israel which are of Israel; neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children; but in Isaac shall thy seed be called.*” The apostle then explains himself thus. “*That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.*” It is observable, that the apostle *contrasts* the children of the *flesh* to the children of the *promise*; and denies, that the former are reckoned for the seed, while he confines the seed to the latter. By the *children of the flesh* the apostle, doubtless, meant the *natural* offspring of Abraham and other believers. By the *children of the promise*, he evidently meant to *distinguish* those, who had an *interest* in the *promises* made to Abraham. That the children of the flesh are not, as such, interested in the promises or covenant, he illustrates by an example. There was *Jacob* and *Esau*, both of them the sons of *Isaac*; yet one was chosen and the other rejected; although they had the same claims, as being the children of a believing parent; and *one* in distinction from the *other* had not *forfeited* the blessings of the covenant: for they were chosen and rejected, before they had “done either good or evil,

that the purpose of God, according to election might stand, &c." By this it appears, that God did not consider himself as being under any covenant obligations, even to the children of his servant *Isaac*; and he dealt with them, as having a *sovereign* right, to do with them as seemed good in his sight. The instance of *Isaac* and *Ishmael*, who were the children of Abraham, and yet, one was counted for the seed while the other was cast out, is also an example, which teaches, that the children of believers after the flesh, are not considered as being interested in the covenant.

It being evident, on the one hand, that an interest in the covenant did not extend to the children of believers, as such; and on the other, that *all* the *natural* offspring of believers, as such, were to be circumcised, it must follow as a consequence; that circumcision, as it respected infants, did not imply or suppose, that those infants which were circumcised were in covenant nor indicate any such standing. If the circumcision of *infants* were designed to signify *their* covenant relation to God, it was necessary, that *all* the children of believers, as such, should have an *interest* in the covenant, in order to their being the proper subjects of circumcision; but this was not the case; the apostle assures us, that the children of the flesh were not reckoned for the seed. *Isaac* was counted for the seed and *Ishmael* was excluded—*Jacob* was chosen and *Esau* rejected. As circumcision, as it respected the infant circumcised, could not be designed as a *token* of the covenant betwixt God and such an infant, so it must be a *joint token* with a *parents* own circumcision, of *his* keeping covenant with God; and nothing could be signified, respecting such a child, excepting *dedication*.

ALTHOUGH, I apprehend, the observations which have been made, make it evident, that circumcision, as it respected infants, was not considered or designed as a *token*, that infants were in covenant, and that

no such interest in the covenant did *exist*, respecting the children of believers, as such; yet it may serve further to confirm the sentiment, if we consider,

III. THE consequences which result from the doctrine of the covenant relation of the children of believers; and that an interest in and title to the covenant was signified by infant circumcision under the law, and so by infant-baptism under the gospel.

If it be true, that the children of believers, as such, are in covenant, or have a title to the blessings of the covenant of grace, I see not, why it will not follow, as a necessary consequence, that such children will be saved: and, why the Jews were so reprehended, by John the Baptist, for saying, "*We have Abraham to our father*;" for nothing of consequence can be meant by being in covenant, unless a title to the blessings of the covenant be intended; and a title to the blessings of the covenant does imply, a title to *grace and glory*; or having God for a God.

It would not afford, as I can conceive, any relief to say, that it is not meant, that the children of believers have an *unconditional* title to the blessings of the covenant, merely, on account of their being the children of believers; for that would be saying, that, as the children of believers, they have no *real* title. If a *real* title depends upon something else, besides their being the children of believers, then, as the children of believers they have no title. Which would be giving up the covenant standing of the children of believers, as such. And, it would avail as little to say, that the title of such children is *visible* and not *absolute*; for that would be, in effect granting, that their *title* is not *real*.

If any thing important be meant, when it is said, that the children of believers are in covenant with God, it must be this, that they have a *present* title, as being the children of believers, to the blessings of the covenant of grace; which blessings were summed up, in the covenant God made with Abraham, in having God for a God; and God is not so unright-

teous as, not to fulfil his covenant engagements. It must then follow, from the doctrine under consideration, that the children of believers will as certainly be saved, as that their parents will; for all the *security* that covenant parents have of their salvation is, their title to the blessings of the covenant of grace; and the same is supposed concerning their seed, in the doctrine under consideration. And the title of such children must be equally *sure*, with that of their believing parents for it is supposed to depend on the *same* condition; namely, the faith or covenant standing of their parents. But, if a real title to the blessings of the covenant be not meant, then saying, that such children are in covenant must be, for ought I can see, a mere jingle of words, without any important meaning.

If it should be said, to avoid the consequence we have under consideration, that parents may afterwards break covenant with God, and so cut off their children, by their unfaithfulness, from the blessings of the covenant, I would observe, that this would be urging something, inconsistent with the principle we are considering. The principle and doctrine we are considering, is this—that the children of believers, as such, are in covenant—their being the children of believing parents is the *condition* of the title. But according to what is now urged, the title depends upon the consequent conduct and behaviour of parents. If the title of children be founded, on their being the children of believers, then, on this condition, the blessings of the covenant must be secured. And urging, that they may be cut off from their *title* by the *consequent or future* conduct of their parents, is giving up the original principle, and placing their title upon a different foundation.

AGAIN, if it should be said, that children may cut *themselves* off from the blessings of the covenant, by their future conduct, that would be urging something in opposition to the doctrine, of children's title to

the blessings of the covenant of grace, on account of their being the children of believers; for on that supposition, their title depends upon something else, besides their connection with believing parents; even upon their future behaviour; and so puts them on a level with all other children. If the title of the children of believers, to the blessings of the covenant, do depend upon something else, besides their connection with believing parents, then they may be the children of believing parents and not have an interest in or title to the blessings of the covenant: but if their title depends upon their being the children of such parents only, then being the children of such parents, their title is *sure* and *absolute*. If it should be said, to avoid the consequence under consideration, that although it be meant, that the *title* of the children of believers is *absolute* while it continues, yet it is not intended to be affirmed, that it continues always; but only to the time, when such children shall become *capable* of acting for themselves; I would answer, that then they have no title to the blessings of the covenant, only upon the supposition that they die before they are capable of acting for themselves; for upon the present supposition, they are to begin to act as other children do: and, the condition of their enjoying God as their God, is not at all founded in their connection with believing parents.

BUT viewing the matter in another point of light, would that which is now urged at all relieve the doctrine, of the covenant title of the children of believers, of the consequence under consideration; namely, that such children will certainly be saved? Being once entitled to the blessings of the covenant of grace, implies a *security* of *grace*; and, if *grace* be secured, *glory* is secured. If the title last but a little time, on the original foundation, yet, as that secures *grace*, and as God has promised, that where a good work is begun, he will carry it on to the day of salvation, so salvation must, on that plan be effectually secured.

SHOULD it be said further, to avoid the consequence under consideration, that it is not meant, by the doctrine of the covenant title of the children of believers, that they have a title to *internal* blessings, but only to the *external* blessings of the covenant; such as means of grace, a christian education, &c. then, I apprehend the whole is a mere *nullity*. I think it appears, from what has been said, that God has not secured those *external* blessings, in any covenant, either to believers or their children; for God does in fact deny them, in innumerable instances, to both. He cuts off such children by death—sends them into captivity, &c. And, believers themselves are often deprived of those *external* blessings, by sickness and other providences. David was, for a long time, banished from God's sanctuary. But, are we to consider the withholdment of those blessings, as a breach of covenant on the part of God? We must not then suppose, that the children of believers have a covenant title to them.

On the whole, I conceive it must be evident, from what has been said, that the doctrine of the covenant standing of the children of believers, as such, is attended with this consequence, that there is a certain connection between being a child of a believer and salvation; and so, that it was without any just warrant, that John the Baptist reproved the Jews for saying, "we have Abraham to our father;" for if being the *descendants* and the *natural seed* of believing parents do constitute an interest in and title to the blessings of the covenant of grace, then the Jews had a good right to promise themselves great things, on account of their connection with Abraham, as their father and progenitor; yea, they might well expect, that God would be their God; for that is the great *good* which is secured in the covenant of grace. This consequence, which results from the doctrine of the covenant-standing of the *natural offspring* of believing parents, as such, leads us to see, that it cannot be scriptural; for John the Baptist warned the Jews against flattering themselves

of covenant blessings on that account ; " Think not to say within yourselves we have Abraham to our father." And the apostle Paul, directly opposes such an idea ; for he expressly says, "*that the children of the flesh are not the children of God ; and that Jacob was loved and Esau rejected, although they were equally the children of Isaac.*"

TAKING into consideration, the several things which have been suggested, is it not evident, that the general idea of the covenant standing of the *natural* offspring of believers, as such, is unscriptural ; that infant circumcision did neither signify nor imply, any such covenant standing ; And, that the circumcision of a parent and his children, was designed to signify the same thing, viz. the covenant standing of the parent ? Doth this not appear, from what was said at the first institution of circumcision ? Is it not also evident, that circumcision was extended, in fact, to such children as were expressly *excluded* from the covenant and promises made to Abraham ? And if it be the case, that the children of the flesh are not counted for the seed and heirs of the promise, and yet, all the children of the flesh were to be circumcised, must it not be evident, that infant circumcision was not designed to signify and did not imply, a covenant standing, respecting the circumcised child ?

I AM not insensible, that a variety of things will be adduced, as objections to what hath been advanced, which merit a particular consideration ; they shall be attended to in the following section.

## SECTION II.

*Wherein, objections to what hath been advanced in the preceding section, are considered.*

**I**N the preceding section, I attempted to prove, that infant circumcision was not designed to indicate a covenant relation to God, relative to the circumcised child; yea, that no such relation doth, in fact, exist between God and the *natural* seed of believers, as such; but that the real design of circumcision, both *adult* and *infant* was to indicate and jointly to signify, the "*righteousness of the faith*," or good covenant standing of the parent. Several things, it is apprehended, will be advanced, as objections to this sentiment in particular; viz. that no covenant relation doth exist, between God and children, on account of their being the children of covenant or believing parents.

I SHALL now proceed to consider and attempt to obviate, such objections as will probably arise; for, I wish not to build on a sentiment, which is embarrassed with unanswerable objections.

**OBJECTION I.** THE covenant and promise which God made to Abraham, "*I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and THY SEED after thee—to be a GOD unto THEE and THY SEED after thee*," stands, as an insurmountable objection to what hath been advanced; as it clearly teaches us, that the covenant did extend to the *natural seed* of Abraham.

**ANSWER.** If the promise, respected in the objection, militate at all against what I have advanced, it must be, because by the term *seed* is meant, the *natural seed* of Abraham. The whole strength of the objection arises, from that sense of the term *seed*.

It may be proper and necessary to premise a few things, before I proceed, directly to establish the meaning of the term *seed*, as used in the promise under consideration.

AND, one thing which it is of importance to premise, is, that the promise made, in the passage under consideration, is as *extensive*, as it respects the *seed*, as it is respecting *Abraham* himself. That is, it includes *every thing* respecting Abraham's *seed*, that it includes, when considered with respect to Abraham *personally*. Therein God promises, precisely the same thing to Abraham's *seed*, that he does to *Abraham*. He promises, equally, to be a God, and to be a God in the same sense to the *seed* of Abraham, that he does to *Abraham* himself. It cannot be said, that to the *seed* is promised only some *external* blessings, if blessings of a more important nature are promised to Abraham; for the promise is made in exactly the same terms and words to both. If we can infer, therefore, from the promise under consideration, that Abraham's *natural seed*, as such, were interested in *any* blessings of the covenant, or were interested in the covenant made with him, we must suppose, they were so in the fullest sense of the words; as *extensively*; at least, as *Abraham* was; because the covenant is expressed in the same terms, both as it respected *Abraham* and his *seed*. Taking the term *seed* to mean Abraham's *natural seed*, must, therefore, unavoidably lead us to this conclusion; that the *natural seed* of Abraham were interested in the covenant of grace, as *extensively* as Abraham himself:—That God engages to be the God of the *natural seed* of Abraham and other believers, as *extensively* and in the *same* sense, that he engages to be the God of believers.

It is necessary to premise further, that the *seed*, in the promise under consideration, not only are interested in blessings as *extensively* as Abraham himself, but as positively and *absolutely*. They have the *same* security of the *same* blessings which were secured to Abraham; for the *security* is expressed in the *same* manner and by the *same* words. If the promise, therefore, secured to Abraham, the *richest* blessings of a spiritual nature, it secured the same things to the

seed. If the promise, as it respected Abraham, contained *all the blessings of the covenant of grace*, and all the *security* that *that* covenant contains, it did so respecting the seed. If the promise comprised and secured the *salvation of Abraham*, it also included and secured the *salvation of the seed*. Now, with these things in view, does it not appear, that there is reason to scruple, whether the *natural seed* of Abraham and of other believers were intended, by the term *seed* in the promise under consideration? Can we believe it to be the case, that the *natural seed* of Abraham and of other believers are interested in the covenant of grace, as *extensively* as believers themselves; that they have *all* that security of *salvation* that believers have? If it were the case, well might the Jews glory in it, that they had "*Abraham to their father.*"

BESIDES, if circumcision were designed to be an *external* token of the covenant, as it respected infants, another difficulty will occur, in fixing upon Abraham's *natural offspring* as the *seed* intended in the promise; for, upon that supposition, it must be confined to Abraham's *natural* children; whereas the institution extended it to *all* that were *born* in his house, and *bought* with his money. The term *seed* cannot mean, therefore, the *natural* offspring of Abraham, as such.

BUT, that the difficulty stated in the objection may be fully obviated and removed, I would observe, that it is very clear, from the sacred scriptures, that the term *seed* in the promise under consideration, was not designed to point out, either the *natural* descendants or *servants* of Abraham. I apprehend it was made evident, in the former section, that the covenant made with Abraham, did not extend to all his own *natural* offspring: *Ismael*, Abraham's son, was excluded and *Isaac* was counted for the *seed*. "*As for Ismael I have heard thee, &c. BUT MY COVENANT WILL I ESTABLISH WITH ISAAC.*" So that the term

*seed*, in the promise, did not comprehend *all* the *natural seed* of Abraham.

THE same thing will appear, with additional evidence, if we attend to the explanation, which the apostle Paul gives of the Abrahamic covenant; and particularly of the term *seed*, in his letter to the Romans, 9th chapter. The apostle there considers the Jews, collectively, as the people to whom pertained the adoption—the glory, and the covenant, &c. v. 4. Nevertheless he adds v. 6. 7. “*They are not ALL Israel, which are of Israel, neither because they are the SEED of Abraham,*” (i. e. natural descendants from Abraham) “*are they ALL children; but in ISAAC shall thy seed be called.*” In these words, the apostle clearly teaches us, that by the *seed* in the promise to Abraham, was not intended his *natural seed*, as such; but the term is limited to *Isaac*, to the exclusion of all others. In the next verse (v. 8) the apostle thus explains himself; “*that is they which are the children of the FLESH, these are not the children of GOD; but the children of the PROMISE are counted for the SEED.*” It is to be carefully observed, that, in these words, the apostle designedly distinguishes the *children of the promise*, as the *seed*, in distinction from the *children of the flesh*, the *natural seed* of Abraham. Which makes it evident, that the apostle Paul did not consider the term *seed*, in the promise now under consideration, as designed to point out the *natural* offspring of Abraham and other believers; for he expressly *restricts* it to *Isaac* in distinction from all others: and carefully distinguishes between the *children of the flesh* and the *children of promise*. It appears, therefore, that the text under consideration affords no kind of evidence, that the *natural seed* of Abraham and other believers are interested in the covenant; or that circumcision, as it respected infants, was designed to signify or imply any such interest; because the ordinance was to extend to *all* Abraham’s *natural* posterity; yea to those that were born in his house and bought with his money.

ALTHOUGH it clearly appears, from what has been already observed, that the words under consideration, cannot be considered as any objection to what was advanced in the former section, as the term *seed* cannot be considered, as meaning the *natural seed* of Abraham ; yet, I would further attempt to show, in what sense we are to understand the term *seed* in the promise. In order to which, I would observe, that although the term *seed* in the promise, was restricted to *Isaac* in distinction from *Ishmael*, yet it comprehended *Isaac's seed*, in the same sense that it did the *seed* of *Abraham* ; as appears from Gen. xvii. 19. It is of importance to observe further, that the promise made to *Isaac* and his *seed* was made to him, as a *type* of JESUS CHRIST and of those who were given to him in the covenant of redemption ; and so the term *seed* ultimately pointed at JESUS CHRIST, and those who were given him by the Father ; and comprehends all *true* believers, in every age of the world. Thus it is explained, by the apostle Paul, Gal. iii. 16. "*Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith, not and to seeds, as of many ; but as of ONE, and to thy seed, which is CHRIST.*" These words respect, the very promise we have now under consideration ; and were designed to explain to us the term *seed*, to which the promise was made, as well as to Abraham ; and the apostle expressly teaches us, that although *Isaac* was mentioned as the *seed*, yet he was respected as a *type* and *representative* of JESUS CHRIST ; and that the term ultimately and in the fullest sense respected CHRIST JESUS.

FARTHERMORE, it is necessary to observe, that in CHRIST JESUS, the *seed* ultimately respected in the promise, was comprehended, *all* that were *given* to Christ, in the covenant of redemption ; or *all* that *believe*, in every age of the world. That the term *seed* is applicable to Christ Jesus, in his mediatorial capacity, and comprehends *all* that are *given* to him is evident, from what the apostle Paul further says, in

before cited Gal. iii. After the apostle had said, that Christ Jesus was the *seed* referred to in the promise, he adds; v. 26 and onward, "*ye are all the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus; there is neither Jew nor Greek, &c. for ye are all ONE in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's* (i. e. believers) *then are ye ABRAHAM'S SEED, AND HEIRS ACCORDING TO THE PROMISE.* It is evident, from these words, that the apostle considered, all that believe, in every age of the world, as being comprehended *in Christ*, as the *seed*. Hence, in v. 9, of the same chapter, the apostle says, "*they which be of faith*" (let them be who they will) "*are blessed with faithful Abraham.*"

ON the whole, from the observations which have been made, I trust it appears, that the promise made to Abraham, cannot be considered, as an objection to what is advanced, in the preceding section. But, instead of its teaching us, that the *natural* seed of believers, as such, are interested in the covenant, there is additional evidence, from what has now been said, that they are not. If the term *seed* be considered as pointing at the *natural* seed of believers, then we must conclude, that the *natural* seed of Abraham and of other believers are interested in the blessings of the covenant of grace, as *extensively* and *absolutely* as Abraham and other believers are; for the interest of the *seed*, in the covenant, is expressed at the same time and by the same words with the interest of *Abraham*. Besides; at the time the promise was made, it was explicitly declared, that the promise was not made to the *natural* seed of Abraham, as such; for *Isaac* was distinguished as the *seed*, and *Ishmael* was rejected. It appears, also, that the promise made to Isaac and his seed, was made to him, as a *type* of Christ, and, that the *seed*, respected in the promise, had an ultimate and express reference to Christ, as the head of all believers. They, as being *in Christ*, are the *seed* respected: for being Christ's, they are "*Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise.*" It will, from

thence follow, that infant circumcision, which was to extend to all Abraham's *natural* offspring, yea, to his *servants*, was not considered, as a *sign* or *token* of their covenant relation to God; because, being Abraham's children after the flesh, did not entitle to the promises. Without adding any thing further here, I shall presume upon it, that the objection is sufficiently obviated and removed.

OBJECTION II. It is said, Acts ii. 39, "*The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call;*" which words contain an express affirmation, that the promise is unto *children*, as well as unto *parents*: and so are directly opposed, to the sentiment advanced, in the preceding section.

ANSWER. The whole strength of the objection formed on this passage, depends upon the truth of the two following propositions; namely, that the promise spoken of in the text, is the *same* promise which was made to Abraham: and, that by *children* is meant, the *natural seed* of believers. I am not insensible, that such a sense and interpretation of the words has very generally been entertained: and, in that view of them, they have been considered, as a capital proof of the doctrine of infant-baptism. But, if the words are to be considered, as holding forth an interest in and title to the covenant of grace, respecting the *natural seed* of believing parents, we must unavoidably conclude, that the interest and title of such children, to the blessings of the covenant of grace, is as *extensive* and *absolute* as that of believing parents: and, that their salvation is as certain as the salvation of parents; for their interest in the covenant or promise, is expressed in the same terms. As much is affirmed concerning *children* as *parents*. But, this cannot be admitted, as being in reality the case. We must, therefore, conclude, that there is some mistake implied in the objection, relative to the meaning of the objected text.—And, I apprehend, that a little atten-

tion to the words, will convince an unprejudiced mind, that they have no respect to the promise made to Abraham ; but that they solely respect a *prophecy* or *prediction*, of the prophet Joel, concerning the effusion of the Holy Spirit, in the *last days* ; or under the gospel dispensation. In the beginning of the chapter, which contains the words under consideration, there is an account, of a very extraordinary operation of the Holy Ghost, on the minds of the multitude, who were assembled together, "in one place," on the day of pentecost. Although the minds of the most were amazed and astonished, yet some mocked and derided the apostles, as though they were "full of new wine." Peter stands up and addresses them, in these words (v. 16), "*This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel.*" He then proceeds to rehearse the prediction at large, v. 17. "*And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, &c.*" that is, upon Jews and Gentiles. After he had made it evident, that what then took place was the fulfilment of a prophecy, which respected the gospel day, or the time of the Messiah, he proceeds to show, that *that* day was in fact come ;—that Christ was crucified and risen as was foretold by David, in the 16 psalm. From all which Peter makes this inference, v. 33 : That Christ being raised and exalted, and having received the promise of the Holy Ghost, "*He hath shed forth this which ye now see.*" It was evident, from comparing the promise of the Holy Ghost, in the last days, made by the prophet Joel, with what then took place, that the Messiah had come, and that the gospel day was introduced. What the apostle advanced had its effect, and produced full conviction, in the minds of many of his hearers—They "*were pricked in their heart,*" and enquired, "*Men and brethren, what shall we do?*" Peter replies, "*Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins ; and ye shall receive the GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST ;*"

for the PROMISE IS UNTO YOU AND TO YOUR CHILDREN, &c. What promise must we suppose the apostle had in view? It must be the promise of the HOLY GHOST, which was made by the prophet Joel; for no other promise had been mentioned, in the whole preceding discourse: and this promise is here mentioned, as a reason, why such as should repent and be baptized might expect to receive the Holy Ghost; as Peter, in the words preceding, had declared they should.

It is to be remarked, that the promise, so called, was not a covenant, but a prediction or declaration of what was to take place, under a particular dispensation; or "*in the last days.*" They to whom the apostle was addressing himself, were subjects, on whom, the prophecy or prediction was fulfilling. The apostle, therefore, calls upon them, to repent and be baptized; and thereby acknowledge and submit to the christian dispensation, which they then saw, with such striking evidence, was introduced. The apostle, when he said, "*the promise is to you*" &c. was not teaching them any covenant obligation, which God was under, either to *them* or their *children*; but, that the prediction, as to the fulfilment of it, respected them and future generations: And, it being so evident, that the christian dispensation was introduced, he calls upon them to submit to it, by being baptized. The prophet Joel, applied the promise or prediction to "*the last days,*"—the gospel day: and the apostle Peter further explains it, by saying, that the fulfilment of it was not confined to those, who then heard him speak; but it was extended to their children, and their childrens children, even to the latest generations.

It hence appears, that it would be misapplying the promise mentioned, in the passage under consideration, to consider it, as being the promise which was made to Abraham: and a greater misapplication and abuse of it, to infer from it, that *children* are interest-

ed in the covenant of grace, because their parents are; for the promise appears to have no reference to the Abrahamic covenant; but is restricted to a particular *prophecy and prediction*. Indeed, there is nothing, of the nature of a covenant, contained in the promise under consideration; it is clearly a prediction of what should come to pass, in the last days; and when the apostle told his hearers, that the promise, was to them, &c. he meant no more, than that the promise, as to the accomplishment of it, respected them,—their children and succeeding generations, both Jews and Gentiles.

It appears evident, therefore, that the passage under consideration cannot be considered, as containing any objection to what has been advanced; for it hath no respect to the Abrahamic covenant, or covenant of grace, nor to the *natural seed* of believers as such.

OBJECTION III. It may be objected, to what is advanced in the foregoing section, that it stands directly opposed to what the apostles said to the Jaylor, Acts xvi. 31. *And they said, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and THINE HOUSE*. In what the apostles say, it will be urged, is not merely implied but directly asserted that the blessings of the new covenant do belong to the children of believers; and that upon the *condition* of the faith of parents.

ANSWER. If this passage do teach us, that the children of believers, as such, are interested at all in the blessings of the covenant of grace, it teaches us, that they are interested in them as *extensively and perfectly* as their believing parents are: and will as certainly be saved.

BUT, is not such a construction of the passage, directly opposed to the most plain and positive assertions of sacred writ? Did not God reckon *Isaac* for the seed and exclude *Ismael*? Did he not chuse *Jacob* and reject *Esau*? Doth not the apostle Paul say, "They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God?"

BESIDES, I am unable to see why we may not, with equal reason, conclude that the faith of the Jaylor would avail for the salvation of his *wife*, as his *children*; for she as much belonged to his house or family as his children did.

FARTHERMORE, it would have been very foreign from the question put to the apostles, for them to have gone into the consideration of the influence of the faith of parents, on the state of children. The Jaylor was under great distress, and enquired, "*Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*" The apostles directed him, to "*believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thine house.*" The most natural and obvious sense of the direction is, that believing would be effectual to his salvation; and that the same would be effectual, also, respecting his house. The latter clause respecting his house, was added, to let the Jaylor know, that they prescribed for him no *singular* condition of salvation; but it was the *common* condition, on which he, and his whole house, and every sinner might be saved. This sense of the passage is, as I conceive, natural and easy; but the sense put upon it in the objection is opposed to plain fact; as in the case of Isaac and Ishmael, and Jacob and Esau; and is opposed to the most plain and obvious design, of that caution which John the baptist gave to the Jews; "*think not to say, within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father;*" for they could not expect more, by being the children of Abraham than the text under consideration teaches us, that children may expect, from being the children of believers, if taken in the sense in which it is considered in the objection.

OBJECTION IV. It is said, Deut. xxx. 6. "*The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart and the heart of thy SEED, to love the Lord thy God, &c.*" wherein there is contained a promise of regenerating grace unto the seed of believers; which supposes, that they are pe-

cularly interested in the blessings of the covenant of grace.

ANSWER. By attending to the passage of scripture contained in this objection, in its connection, we shall see, that it holds forth nothing, which is, in the least, repugnant to the idea of the standing of the children of believers, held forth in the preceding section. In the preceding chapter, Moses had been pronouncing *blessings* on the *obedient*, and *curses* on the *disobedient*. The chapter which contains the passage under consideration, begins, by saying, that if the children of Israel, after experiencing those blessings and curses, should return unto the Lord, *they and their children with all their heart, and with all their soul*, that then the Lord their God would turn their captivity, &c. And, “*If any of thine be driven out, unto the outmost parts of heaven; from thence will the Lord thy God, gather thee, and from thence, will he fetch thee; and the Lord thy God will bring thee, into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers. And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart and the heart of thy seed, &c.*” The whole amount of the passages, taken together, is this; that in case the Jews should be carried into captivity, if they and their children would turn to God, that then God would return them from their captivity, and pour out his spirit upon them. God is here informing his people, by Moses, the plan upon which he meant to act, in dealing out good and evil. And, at the same time, lets them know, that this is a plan, that he means should extend to their children—to after generations. And hence, when the condition of enjoying the blessing of God is expressed (which is turning unto the Lord with all the heart) their children are considered as turning to God, as well as they themselves, (verse 2.) “*And shalt return unto the Lord thy God, &c. thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul,*” then &c. as in verse 3. The children and seed

are introduced, only to show, that God had established the same plan of operation, respecting *them* and their *children* after them—God informs his people, verse 9, how extensively he would bless them, in case they shall at any time return to Him, and obey his voice. “*The Lord thy God will make thee plenteous in every work of thine hand, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy land, &c.*” Now if it were really intended, that God would actually regenerate the children of his people, in the passage under consideration, we could no more infer, that their children were in covenant, than that the fruit of their *cattle* and *land* were in covenant, because God says, he will bless them, in the fruit of their *cattle* and in the fruit of their *land*, &c. as well as in their children. In truth, nothing further can be designed than to show us, how *extensively* interested God’s *own* people are, in his favour and loving kindness; so far interested, that every thing, their *children*, *cattle*, and *lands*, shall be subordinated to their good. It is unreasonable to infer a title to the peculiar blessings of the covenant of grace, respecting the *natural* seed of believers, as such, from the expressions used in the passage under consideration, when it is capable of another important meaning; and especially, when it is so expressly said, that the children of the flesh are not the children of God; and when *Ishmael*, *Abraham’s* own son, was rejected and excluded from the covenant.

OBJECTION V. God declares in his word, that believers, or his people, shall be blessed *in the fruit of the womb—in the fruit of their body*—that it shall go well with them and *with their children after them*, &c.\* All which declarations imply, that the children of believers have an interest in the covenant. And, respecting the righteous, it is also said; “his soul shall dwell at ease and his *seed* shall inherit the earth.”

\* Deut. vii. 12, 13, and xxviii. 4, and iv. 40.

And "*the children* of thy servants shall continue, and their *seed* shall be established before thee."

ANSWER. As to the declarations which are contained in the first part of the objection, I would observe; that they are only declarations, which God makes to his people, of the *extent* of his designs to bless them. God says, in the passages alluded to in the objection, that they shall be blessed in the fruit of the womb, &c. In other places, and indeed in connection with those very declarations, God says, that they shall be blessed in *the fruit of their ground* and *their cattle*, in the *increase of their kine*, and the *flocks of their sheep*, in their *basket* and in their *store*. Now, are we from thence to infer, that the fruit of their *cattle* and *kine*, their *sheep*, their *basket* and *store* are in covenant with God? Why not, as well as that children are, because God declares to the righteous or believers, that they shall be blessed in their children? It is observable, that those promises are no more made to *children*, than to the *cattle*, *basket* and *store*; but they are blessings which God gives to believers.

God declares, that "*all things work together for good*, to them that love him;" which implies, that their children, cattle, flocks, and their increase, the wrath of all their enemies—yea, the *malice* and *subtlety* of *satan*, shall be so over-ruled and disposed of, as shall terminate in the highest good of such as love God. But can we infer, because God promises such *good* to them who love him, that he establishes his covenant with their *cattle*—with their *wicked enemies*—and with *satan* himself?—Those declarations are only designed to show good men, how *extensively* God designs to bless them. It would be unreasonable to conclude, that all those things, which God will bless to the good of his people, are interested in the covenant; and equally so, in the case of children, as in regard to other enumerated blessings; since it is

\* Psalm xxxv. 13, and cii. 28.

so expressly said, *that the children of the flesh are not the children of God.*

As to those passages of scripture, which are mentioned, in the latter part of the objection, it may be sufficient to observe, that they, with many other passages of like import, respect the *generation* or *succession* of righteous men, and not their *natural* offspring. It is said, "*God is in the generation of the righteous.*"\* "*The generation of the upright shall be blessed.*"† In these passages, the *race* of godly, upright and righteous men are meant; or the *pious* in every generation and age. And the passages, now under consideration, are doubtless parallel with them. They cannot have reference to the *natural seed* of the righteous; because it is expressly said, *that they are not the children of God.*

OBJECTION VI. THE transactions which took place, between God and the tribes of Israel, on the plains of Moab (recorded in Deut. 29th chapter) indicate, that the children of God's covenant people are in covenant with him; for they were present, and the covenant is said to be made with those present, and with those who were absent.

ANSWER. I apprehend, but a little attention to the transactions respected in this objection, will make it evident, that nothing can be inferred from them, which is inconsistent with what has been advanced, in the preceeding section. If it be the case, as I trust it certainly is, that parents, in covenanting with God, do *dedicate* not only *themselves*, but their *children* to him, there was the highest propriety in their taking their little ones with them, when they appeared before God, for the express purpose of renewing their covenant; for in renewing their covenant, they were to dedicate their children as well as themselves. There was a sufficient reason for taking their *little ones* with them, although *they* were not con-

\* Psalm, xiv. 5.

† Psalm cxii. 2.

sidered as being entitled to the blessings of God's covenant : and so it cannot be infered, from thence, that they had any such interest.—And, although it be said, that God made a covenant with those, who were then standing before him, and with those that were absent, yet there is nothing appears, from the whole account of the transaction, that any, excepting adults, were respected, in those expressions. It must appear, from something else, beside this account of the transaction, if it appear at all. The history of this transaction, therefore, cannot be considered, as containing any thing, inconsistent with the sentiment, advanced in the former section.

NEITHER can any thing be infered, in opposition to what has been advanced, from the covenant's being *binding on all*. If it had been said, that the *little ones* in particular were holden to do the things contained in the covenant, which was made between God and Israel, we could not infer, that they were interested in the *blessings* of the covenant, merely as being the children of covenant people ; for their being *dedicated* to God, and by God's command, implies such obligations. We have reason to conclude, that there are thousands of men, who are under indispensible obligations to do the duties which are enjoined in the gospel, who, at the same time, have no covenant-title to the blessings which it tenders.

NOTHING, therefore, can be infered from the transactions, on which the present objection is grounded, in opposition to what has been advanced.

OBJECTION VII. OUR Saviour says, Mark x. 14. "*Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not : for OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD ;* which supposes, that little children are interested in the blessings of the covenant : for our Saviour considers them, as the objects of divine benediction ; and expressly says, that "*of such is the kingdom of God.*"

ANSWER I. It doth not appear, that the *little children*, mentioned in the verse, on which this objection

is founded; were the children of *covenant* or *believing* parents. Neither doth it appear, whether more or less be implied in Christ's  *blessing* them, and saying "*of such is the kingdom of God,*" that they had any *covenant-title* to those blessings; or if they had, that they held that *title*, by being the *children of believing parents*; and so, cannot be considered, as militating at all against what has been said.

2. If we attend more particularly to the passage, I conceive, we shall see, that there is nothing at all asserted, or held forth in it, from whence we can infer, the *covenant-standing* of the children of believers, as such, or of *any* children. If such an inference can be made, it must be, either because Christ  *blessed* them; or, because he said, "*of such is the kingdom of God.*" But doth Christ's  *blessing* them imply, that they had an interest in the *covenant of grace*? If so, we may infer, that *all* men under gospel light, without excepting the most *profligate* and *abandoned*, are interested in the *covenant of grace*, for innumerable blessings are conferred on them. God causes "his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." The *wisest* of men are, in innumerable respects, the objects of God's benediction. But can we from thence infer, that they are interested in the *covenant of grace*? Certainly, such a mode of reasoning is most unjust and fallacious.\*

AND equally unwarrantable, is such an inference, concerning the *covenant-standing* of the children of believers, from Christ's saying, "*of such is the kingdom of God.*" What must be the meaning of Christ, in that expression? I think it very manifest, that by the *kingdom of God*, *heaven* itself was intended; for in the next words Christ says, "Verily, I say unto you, who-

\* Saint Matthew says (chap. xix. 13.) that those little children were brought, that he might "put his hands on them and pray." Now if Christ's praying for them implied an interest in the *covenant of grace*, then were Christ's persecutors interested in the same *covenant*; for Christ prayed for them, "*Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.*"

soever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." And in this sense of the words, the purpose that Christ had in using them, was more completely answered, than in any other; for Christ, without doubt, intended, by them, to show the propriety of children being offered to him for his blessing; because, of such is the kingdom of God. Now, if the inhabitants of heaven, are to consist in part of children, they certainly are the proper subjects of his blessing—What is meant then by the expression, "*of such is the kingdom of God*," is this, that heaven is to be made up, in part, of children—perhaps not of those very children which were then brought to Christ: but *of such* is heaven, in part to consist.

BUT if heaven will be made up, in part, of *little children*, can we from thence infer, that little children have a title to the  *blessings* of the covenant of grace? May we not then infer, that *all* little children are interested in the covenant of grace, as well as the children of believers? where would such a mode of reasoning lead us? The kingdom of heaven will be made up, in part, of *adults*; but can we infer that all adults are in covenant for that reason? The kingdom of heaven may consist in part of those, who are *now* very *profligate* and *wicked* men; but can we from thence infer, that wicked men are in covenant with God?

It appears clearly, therefore, that the present objection cannot have any weight in it. By no justifiable mode of reasoning, can the covenant-standing of *any* children, be inferred, from the passage adduced in the present objection.

OBJECTION VIII. If circumcision and so baptism, so far as *infants* are respected, were not designed to indicate *their* personal interest in the covenant, then when such an interest doth take place, *rebaptization* is necessary.

ANSWER I. As we have no precept or example for

*rebaptizing* in any case, under the same dispensation, so we have no warrant for practising it, in any case, however requisite it may appear to us.

2. In the case under consideration, in particular, rebaptization is not necessary, according to the practical acknowledgment of the churches. It is not supposed necessary to rebaptize an adult, who has so apostatized from the faith, as to give the most indubitable evidence, that he never had any title to the blessings of the covenant of grace. When such an one becomes truly penitent, he is received to christian fellowship, without being again baptized. This is a *practical* acknowledgment, that rebaptization is not necessary in the present case.

BUT there being no *precept* or *example* for rebaptizing, under the same dispensation, sufficiently relieves the doctrine, which has been advanced, from the present objection.

OBJECTION IX. UPON the supposition, that infant circumcision and so infant-baptism were designed, only as a token of *dedication*, then it is as necessary, that a believer's *house* and *land* be baptized as his children; for it is as necessary, that he dedicate them to God, in order to his complying fully with the covenant of grace, as to dedicate his children.

ANSWER 1. THERE is a reason for the baptism of *children*, upon the supposition that *dedication* only is signified by it, which doth not exist, respecting *houses* and *land*. Children are a possession of *unspeakably* greater value and importance, than houses and lands. They are designed, as moral agents and probationers for eternity: and are much more interested in a parents feelings and affection, than any thing which belongs to him. The dedication of *himself* and *children* doth sufficiently imply, a dedication of *every* thing.

2. It is the observation of an apostle, that "*the foolishness of God is wiser than men;*" and it may far-

isfy our minds in the present case. As God hath restricted the administration of baptism to the believer and his children, it ought to satisfy our minds, as being sufficient, let the design of the ordinance be what it will.

I HAVE now attended, to the most important objections which I can suppose will be alledged, against the doctrine which hath been advanced, respecting the standing of the *natural seed* of believers. Whether they be sufficiently obviated, the judicious must determine.

ON the whole, I would now submit to consideration, whether if the term *seed* in the promise made to Abraham, do mean the *natural seed* of Abraham, it will not certainly follow, as a consequence, that the *natural seed* of Abraham and of other believers, have as *absolute* and *extensive* a title to the blessings of the covenant of grace, as Abraham and other believers have ; and so, whether the Jews might not with good reason say, “ we have Abraham to our father ? ” — Whether it be not clear, that God himself did not consider the term *seed*, in the Abrahamic covenant, to mean Abraham’s *natural seed* ; as he disowned *Ismael* and retained *Isaac* ; — loved *Jacob* and hated *Esau* ? — And, whether the apostle Paul doth not most decidedly determine, that the *natural seed* were not meant, by the term *seed* in the Abrahamic covenant, as he expressly says, “ they which are the children of the *flesh*, these are not the children of God ; ” but that the *seed* promised was *Christ*, and in him all believers ?

I would further ask, whether it be not certain, that the circumcision of an infant did not indicate its covenant relation to God, since *such* children were circumcised, by the direction of God, as were expressly excluded from the *seed* mentioned in the covenant : and since *all* the children of the flesh were to be circumcised, and, at the same time, *all* the children of the flesh were not counted for the seed ?

I WOULD also, submit to consideration, whether it be not evident, according to the account given, at

the institution of circumcision, that the circumcision of infants was considered, as a *joint-token* with a parents own circumcision, of his keeping covenant : and that, so far as children were respected, it was only a *token* of their *dedication*.

FINALLY ; If the Abrahamic covenant be the covenant of grace, as all pedo-baptists do suppose, will it not follow, that the infants of believers, as such, are not in covenant—that infant-baptism is to be considered, as a joint-token with a believers own baptism, that the believer doth keep covenant ; and that *dedication* only is signified respecting the infant baptized ?

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### SECTION III.

*Showing, that the Abrahamic Covenant was the COVENANT OF GRACE : And, that the sentiment advanced in the foregoing sections, tends to the establishment of the practice of Infant-Baptism.*

AS the sentiment which hath been advanced, relative to the end and design of baptism, is founded on this idea, that the covenant God made with Abraham, was the covenant of grace : and, as that idea, if true, will remove the capital objections which have been raised against the practice of infant baptism, it is of importance to make it appear, that the Abrahamic covenant was, indeed, the covenant of grace. It will not be pretended, however, that there were not certain things and promises blended in with the covenant made with Abraham, as appendages, which strictly speaking do not belong to the covenant of grace : such as the promise of the earthly Canaan, and that the Messiah should descend from Abraham ; yet, I trust, it can be made very evident, that the covenant of grace was included in it ; yea, that it was *that* in which the Abrahamic covenant did *radically* consist.

By the covenant of grace is meant, that covenant in which God engageth pardon and salvation, to penitent and believing sinners, through Jesus Christ. That this covenant was included in and is that of which the Abrahamic covenant did most essentially and radically consist, is what I shall now attempt to show.—And,

I. THE blessings which God bestowed on Abraham, in the covenant he made with him, make it extremely evident, that it was the covenant of grace.

THE Abrahamic covenant has been considered, by some, as securing only a few trifling, temporal blessings; yet, in fact, it secures blessings of such magnitude, that the covenant of grace cannot boast of greater. Yea, the self same blessings are stipulated to Abraham, that are secured to believers in the covenant of grace. Therein, God engages to Abraham, to be his God. These are the words of the covenant, *And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, TO BE A GOD UNTO THEE AND THY SEED AFTER THEE.* Gen. xvii. 7. In this covenant, God gives *Himself* unto Abraham: which implies every thing that the covenant of grace secures to believers. It is very remarkable, that the same phraseology is preserved in the new Testament, when the blessings of the covenant of grace are expressed. Thus, all the blessings which God conferred on *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*—on antient saints, and which will be finally conferred on gospel believers, are expressed and summed up in God's being their God. Thus our Saviour expresses the blessings God gave to *Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*. "I am the God of *Abraham*, and the God of *Isaac*, and the God of *Jacob*."\* The apostle Paul thus sums up the blessings which were bestowed on the antient saints, "Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called THEIR GOD."† And all the blessedness and glory which will be finally conferred on believers in Heaven, is

\* Matth. xxii. 32.

† Heb. xi. 16.

thus expressed :—" *He that overcometh shall inherit ALL THINGS ; and I WILL BE HIS GOD.*"† There appears from these passages, a most remarkable *sameness* of expression used, in the various parts of the sacred scriptures, in expressing the blessings secured in the Abrahamic covenant and covenant of grace ; the same words and expressions, are carefully used. From thence we may with certainty infer the *identity* of the covenant.

2. AN additional evidence of the *identity* of the covenants under consideration is this, that the *terms* and *conditions* are *one* and the *same*.

IF the  *blessings* conferred are the *same*, and also the *terms* and *conditions* of a title to them, there is the most substantial reason to conclude, that the *covenants* are the *same*. And nothing is more evident, than that this is really the case. *Faith* is the term and condition of a *title* to each covenant. That this was the condition of an interest in the Abrahamic covenant, the apostle Paul very clearly teaches us ; for circumcision, which was the token of an interest in that covenant, he mentions, as a *token* of the *righteousness of faith*. Rom. iv. 11. *And he* (i. e. Abraham) *received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith, which he had yet being uncircumcised.* And he adds, v. 13, "*The promise* (which his faith respected) *was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.*" From these passages it becomes evident, not only that faith was the *term* and *condition* of an interest in the Abrahamic covenant ; but that it was the *same* faith which interests in the blessings of the covenant of grace ; for the apostle, from the beginning of the chapter, is speaking of a justifying faith—a faith by which Abraham was justified—became righteous before God ; and, in consequence of which, his sins and iniquities were remembered no more. See Rom iv.

1—14.

† Rev. xxi. 7.

A FURTHER evidence that faith was the condition of a title to the blessings of the covenants under consideration is, that *unbelief* cut persons off from the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant, as it does from the blessings of the covenant of grace. Hence it is, that the Israelites, "whose carcases fell in the wilderness," were said to fall by their *unbelief*. And the apostle Paul makes it exceedingly evident, that a standing in these covenants is brought about and maintained by the same means; viz. "*by faith*." When speaking of the rejection of the Jews, he says, it was, "*because of unbelief*;" and when speaking of the gentile or christian church, he says, "*and thou standest by faith*." The same thing which cut off a Jew from the privileges of the Abrahamic covenant, cut off a Gentile from the privileges of the gospel covenant, or covenant of grace; *because of unbelief* THEY were broken off, and THOU standest by faith." Rom. xi. 20.

It is, from hence, as evident as a truth can be, that faith is the term, which connects with the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant and of the covenant of grace. The *blessings* being the same and the *conditions* of an interest in them the same, makes the *identity* of the covenants unquestionably evident.

3. It appears, that the Abrahamic covenant and the covenant of grace, are essentially the same, not only from their securing the same important blessings and on the same condition, but, because the *promises* made in each of the covenants are of *grace*, and are made *through Jesus Christ*. That this is the case is as evident, respecting the Abrahamic covenant as the covenant of grace. The blessings promised in the Abrahamic covenant, it is said, came on him "*through the righteousness of faith*;" Rom. iv. 13. In the same manner, justification and pardon are bestowed on believers in Christ; which is through faith, "*that it might be by grace*." The apostle Paul, speaking of the promises made to Abraham, says, Rom. iv. 16. *Therefore, it is of FAITH, that it might be by*

GRACE; *to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed.* The same apostle says, that the blessings of Abraham *come on the Gentiles through Christ Jesus.* Gal. iii. 14. The same blessings which were given to Abraham, are here said to come on the Gentiles *through Christ Jesus.* Can it be supposed, that they come on the Gentiles, in a manner, different from that in which they came on Abraham? Did they come on *Abraham* through the works of the law, and on the *Gentiles* through Christ Jesus? The apostle assures us, that was not the case; for he says, that Abraham received them not "*through the law, but through the* RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH." Rom. iv. 13. So that the Abrahamic covenant exactly coincides with the covenant of grace, as its promises were *gratious* promises, and were made *through Christ Jesus.*

4 It further appears, that the covenant made with Abraham, was the covenant of grace, because *baptism* is said to be a *token* of the *same blessings* that were contained in the covenant which God made with Abraham.

It is agreed, on all hands, that baptism is a token of the covenant of grace. Now if it also indicate an interest in the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant, we must conclude, that the covenants are considered by the sacred writers as the same. And, that this is really the case, we learn from the words of Saint Paul (Gal. iii. 27, 29.) *As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ; —and if ye be CHRIST's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.* Circumcision was a token, that the person transacting was of the seed of Abraham, and an heir according to the promise; and in the passage just now cited, the same thing is affirmed of such as are baptized. If baptism, in distinction from circumcision, were a token of the covenant of grace, and denoted a *title to blessings* which were *far more important* than those which were contained in the Abrahamic covenant, can we suppose, that

the apostle would attempt to comfort baptized christians, by telling them, that they were *heirs* of the promises made to Abraham;—when they were *heirs* of promises, which were infinitely more important! Besides; being Christ's, that is, entitled to all the blessings of the covenant of grace, and being heirs of the promises made to Abraham are considered, by the apostle, in the above passage, as being the same thing. "*If ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise:*" that is according to the promise made to Abraham. It becomes very evident, from thence, that the apostle did consider the Abrahamic covenant and the covenant of grace, as being *essentially* the same.

5. THE sacred scriptures, in a very direct manner, teach us, that the covenants under consideration are the same.

THE apostle Paul says, Gal. iii. 8. *The scriptures foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the GOSPEL unto ABRAHAM, saying, in thee shall all nations be blessed.* By the gospel we must understand the covenant of grace, or plan of acceptance with God, through faith in Christ Jesus. This gospel is said, in the passage just now cited, to have been preached unto Abraham. But when was it preached unto Abraham? At the very time that God revealed the promises to him;—at the very time that he said to him, "*In thee shall all nations be blessed.*" Which makes it evident, that the covenant God made with Abraham, was the gospel covenant, or covenant of grace; otherwise it could not be said, that the gospel was preached to him, when God said to him "*in thee, &c.*"

IN Gal. iii. 14. The apostle speaks of the blessings of Abraham coming on the Gentiles "*through Christ Jesus.*" Are the blessings of Abraham, and those which come on the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, the same? Then, most certainly, the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant, were the blessings of the

covenant of grace. The same apostle says, Gal. iii. 7. *They which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.* Faith is the condition or term of an interest in the covenant of grace; therefore, this assertion of the apostle amounts to this, that being believers and enjoying a title to the blessings of the covenant of grace, is the *same* thing as being children of Abraham, and enjoying a title to the blessings of the covenant, which God made with him. Which is almost roundly to assert, the *identity* of the covenants. In verse 9, the apostle says, "*so they which be of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham,*" i. e. enjoy the same blessings which God gave to Abraham, by covenant; which makes it evident, that the apostle did consider the covenants as being *essentially* the same.

THE foregoing considerations, I apprehend, make it very evident, that the covenant which God made with Abraham, was the covenant of grace. This being the case, *circumcision* under the law, or *Jewish* dispensation, and *baptism* under the *christian* dispensation must indicate the same thing; as they are *tokens* of the *same* covenant; and, therefore, we must conclude, for the reasons adduced in the preceding sections, that the *natural seed* of covenant parents are not interested in the blessings of the covenant, nor to be baptized on any such account;—and, that the baptism of a parent and his children, is to be considered as *one* transaction;—as a *joint token*, that the parent keeps covenant with God; and that *dedication* only is signified, respecting the baptized child.

ON a view of the whole that has been advanced, a general objection may arise; namely, that the whole tendency of it is to overthrow the practice of infant baptism; for the covenant standing of children, or of the *natural offspring* of believers has been, very generally, considered as the very foundation of the practice.

ANSWER. IT is readily acknowledged, that so far as a title to or interest in the blessings of the cove-

nant, respecting the natural seed of believers, as such, has been considered, as the foundation of the practice of infant-baptism, so far the foundation of the practice is overthrown, if the foregoing reasonings be conclusive; but then, as I conceive, a foundation is substituted in its room, which is more stable, and cannot be moved. That this may appear, I shall now apply what hath been advanced, in vindication of infant-baptism; and attempt to show, that it really tends to establish the practice.

1. THE foregoing representation of the *end* and *design* of infant-baptism makes it appear, that it is an institution and practice, which is agreeable to the *dictates of reason*.

It is the obvious duty of every adult, to dedicate *himself* and his *children* to God; because God has the most absolute right to *him* and to *all* that he calls and esteems his own. *That* being a *natural* as well as *revealed* duty, every adult, whether he be baptized or not, must be under most sacred obligations to make such a dedication. And, if it be a *natural* and *revealed* duty, to make such a universal dedication of *all* to God, it is reasonable that he should make it evident, *that* he doth it. And, as this is so obvious a duty, it is not unreasonable to suppose, that God would institute some *token*, which should be a *standing* indication that he complies with his duty. This being the case, the institution of baptism, in the view in which it has been considered in the preceding sections, both as it respects *adults* and *infants*, appears *rational* and *important*. It certainly is a dictate, both of *reason* and *revelation*, that parents should dedicate themselves and their children to God? and as baptism, adult and infant, is designed as an indication that parents do make such a dedication, it is reasonable in its nature, and equally so, that *children* be baptized as *parents*.

2. WHAT has been advanced, relative to the ordinance of baptism, affords a satisfactory solution of the difficulties and objections, which *antipedobaptists*

have raised, in opposition to the practice of infant-baptism.

1. WHAT has been advanced shows, that the objection of a want of *precept* or *example* for baptizing infants, is without any just reason.

INDEED, setting aside what hath been said, the objection cannot be esteemed very weighty? for we read of the apostles baptizing of *households*; and the probability is much greater, that there were *children* belonging to them, than that there were not. But be that as it may, what hath been advanced, affords a satisfactory answer to the objection.

If the Abrahamic covenant were really the covenant of grace, as it appears it was; and if circumcision were the *token* of it, the practice has been in being, in effect, from the time of Abraham. That infant circumcision was practised, yea absolutely enjoined is certain; and that it was designed as a token of the Abrahamic covenant, which was the covenant of grace, we have the most plenary evidence; so the same sign or token was always in use. An alteration of the *mode* or *manner* of signifying the same thing, makes no alteration respecting the *subject*. The same precept, which originally enjoined a *sign* or *token* of the covenant to be applied to an infant, is still in force, notwithstanding the token is altered; unless there be a *new* precept, *altering* the *subject* as well as the *token*. It belongs to those, who scruple the practice of infant baptism, to produce such a precept, which prohibits the application of the *token* of the covenant to infants under the christian dispensation, instead of objecting a want of precept for it; for the truth is, that a token of the same nature and design has been administered to infants from the beginning, and that by the direct command of God; which must now be in force as to the subjects, unless it have been revoked since, by a special precept from God. An alteration of the *token*, by no means implies an alteration of the *subject*. It belongs, there-

fore, to such as scruple the practice, before they object a want of precept for baptizing of infants, to produce a precept, whereby God has *prohibited* that token of the covenant to be set on infants, under the christian dispensation, which was expressly commanded under the Abrahamic and Mosaic dispensations.

2. WHAT has been said removes another objection to the practice of infant-baptism; namely, that the *faith* and *belief* of a *parent* cannot entitle his *children*, to the blessings of the covenant.

THE baptism of *children* has, very commonly, been considered, as a *token* of *their* covenant relation to God: and that *relation* has been supposed to be grounded on the *faith*, or covenant standing of their parents. The opposers of infant baptism object to such a covenant standing, as to the *natural seed* of believers. They say, that the faith of parents never had such an influence respecting their carnal seed;—that an interest in the covenant is a *personal* thing, and depends on *personal* exercises. But, if what has been advanced, relative to the design of infant baptism, be true, such an objection is *idle* and altogether *impertinent*. If by the baptism of an infant, its *dedication* only is signified, and not any *interest* which it has in the covenant, there is no room for the objection; for no covenant standing, as to children is requisite, as a qualification; for they are as proper subjects of being *dedicated* to God by parents, if they have no interest in the covenant, as they would be, if their *personal* standing were ever so *complete* and *perfect*.

3. THE objection against the practice of infant baptism, which originates from a want of *faith* and *repentance* in infants, is obviated and removed, by what hath been advanced, relative to the end and design of baptism.

THEY, who oppose the practice of infant baptism, say, that the exhortations of the gospel are, *repent*, *believe*, and be baptized; which makes it evident, that *repentance* and *faith* are requisite qualifications for

baptism. They further say, that infants are incapable of those exercises ; and, therefore, cannot be the proper subjects of baptism. This is, probably the most *popular* objection which has been made to the practice ; and has influenced more to renounce infant baptism at large, and their own baptism in infancy in *particular*, than every other objection which has been raised. But, if the *design* of infant baptism be viewed, in the point of light in which it has been considered, in the preceding sections, the objection will appear altogether groundless ; for then it will appear, that neither *faith*, *repentance*, nor a single *doctrinal idea* is necessary to prepare the way for administering baptism to an infant. I mean, that those things are not necessary in the infant baptized : for baptism doth not suppose, that it has faith. It implies, that the *parent* has faith and doth dedicate such a child to God. The parent, who dedicates, ought to have *knowledge*, *faith*, &c. but they are not necessary as to the *infant* ; for whether it have *faith*, &c. or not, the parent may *dedicate* it to God ; yea, were it certain, that it had not faith, the parent would be under the *same* obligations to *dedicate* it and *all* that he has to God, as if it were ever so firm a believer ; and, that he doth this, is what is designed to be signified by its baptism.

I TRUST, I have proceeded far enough, in the application of what has been advanced, for the establishment of the practice of infant baptism, to show, that instead of *subverting* the foundation of the practice, it does, in the most effectual manner, remove the most capital objections, which its opposers have raised against it.

I HAVE now finished what I had to offer, relative to the first article of enquiry. I have been the more lengthy and particular here, as I consider the *end* and *design* of baptism, as the *pole star* to direct us through the remaining inquiries.

## SECTION IV.

*Wherein is considered, what that is which qualifies an infant for and renders it a proper subject of baptism.*

**A**S infant baptism is not designed to indicate, and doth not imply, any knowledge, grace, nor personal interest, in the blessings of the covenant of grace, as to the infant baptized, so we are not to look to an infant for *that* which prepares the way, for the administration of baptism to it. We are not to examine the infant in quest of knowledge, faith, repentance, or any personal qualification, to prepare the way for it's baptism. But, as the design of infant baptism is to indicate and manifest, that the parent keeps covenant with God, so we are to look for *that* which qualifies and prepares the way for the administration of baptism to any infant, in the parent, owner or proprietor of the infant.\* And, as the baptism of infants is designed, as a token that the parent or he who dedicates them doth keep covenant with God, so there are two things, in particular, which are essentially requisite, to prepare the way for the baptism of any infant. One thing requisite is, *that the infant, which is offered for baptism, be the child or property of him who offers it.* The other thing which is requisite, is, *that he, who offers a child for baptism is, as far as we are able to judge, really and completely in covenant with God.*

In these two things, it is apprehended, is included every thing, which is necessary to prepare the way for the administration of baptism, to a child or infant. I shall offer some things to consideration, that this may appear.

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\* I use the words *parent, owner or proprietor*, here and elsewhere, to point out those relations which Abraham stood in, to those children which he was directed to dedicate to God; viz. Those that were *born in his house* and *bought with his money* of any stranger, which was not of his seed. Thereby meaning, to comprehend all that were properly his *own*; i. e. under his direction and at his disposal; or all those to which he had a natural right, in distinction from others. In this sense the terms are to be understood, when used hereafter.

1. One thing requisite to prepare the way, and to qualify any infant or child for baptism is, that it be the *child* or *property* of him who offers it.

THE design of infant baptism is to indicate, that the parent, or the adult who offers it, doth keep covenant, by dedicating what belongs to him to God. The very end of the ordinance of infant baptism implies, that the infant offered doth belong to him, who offers it for baptism. It cannot appear, that a person dedicates any thing to God, from his offering *that* which does not *belong* to him;—that which is not his *own*. As an evidence or *token*, that we comply with the covenant of grace, God never made it necessary, that we should dedicate *that* to Him, which belongs to *another*, and to which *we* have no peculiar claims. Indeed, it would be no evidence, that a person devotes every thing to God, because he pretends to offer *that* to God, which doth not belong to him. If a person should dedicate himself and that which belongs to him, which is his *own*, to the service of God, it would be a witness in his favour.

AN infant, therefore, must be the *natural offspring*, or *property* of him, who offers it for baptism, or there can be no propriety in administering baptism to it. Accordingly we find, that *dedication* was confined to Abraham's *own* children; that is, to those who belonged to him. He was to circumcise those only, that were born in his house or were bought with his money. Abraham had no right to extend the ordinance beyond those limits. His going thus far, was a *token*, a *complete* token that he kept God's covenant. Abraham himself could not dedicate and had not a right to offer any children for circumcision, but such as belonged to him, in distinction from any other man. Which teaches us, in the most direct manner, that one thing which is requisite to the administration of baptism to any child, is, that it belongs to and is the *property* of him who offers it. Besides, the very design of the ordinance is such, as clearly in-

dicates the same thing; for it can be no evidence of the piety, or friendship of any man to God, that he undertakes to dedicate *that* to Him which is not his *own*; or does not belong to him, in distinction from others. And it is certain, that the institution of circumcision did not admit, that even *Abraham* should undertake to offer any child in circumcision, which did not belong to him. It is evident, therefore, that one thing which is requisite to qualify a child for baptism, is, that it be the child or property of him, who offers it for baptism.

FROM the observations which have now been made, we see, that *church members*, as such, have no right or authority, to take the children of other persons and offer them in baptism. Some have supposed, that church members, as such, have a right, to take the children of those, who do not belong to the church, and have them baptized on their account, as it is sometimes expressed; but it hence appears, that such an opinion and practice is utterly unwarrantable. Abraham did not presume to take such a step; and God never authorized him to do it; but confined him to his own children. And what right or property have *church members*, as such, in the children of unbelievers? They have, as such, no right to controul or dispose of them, either by the laws of God or man. The kingdom is not, as yet, "given to the people of the saints of the most High." And it can be no evidence of their piety and friendship to God, that they undertake to dedicate *that* to Him, which does not belong to them. Abraham was not authorized to do it, and he never presumed to be so pragmatistical.—But,

2. ANOTHER thing requisite to qualify an infant for baptism, is, that the *parent* or *owner* of it be, as far as men are able to judge, *really* and *completely* in covenant with God.

ALTHOUGH it be one thing, which is essentially necessary, to qualify a child for baptism, that it belong to and be the property of him who dedicates it,

yet, that is not all which is requisite ; but in addition to that, it is necessary, that the parent or owner of the child be *completely* in covenant with God. By being *completely* in covenant is meant, that he be so *understandingly* and in every respect, so far as men are able to judge. That this is a requisite, appears evident from the very design of baptism. Adult and infant-baptism is to be a joint-token, that the parent or owner does keep covenant : or is in good covenant standing with God. The very end and design of the ordinance, therefore, makes it evident, that the parent or dedicator must be in covenant, that the way may be prepared, either for his own baptism, or the baptism of his children.

A PARENT'S offering and dedicating his children to God, in baptism, is not the *only* thing which is requisite to his being considered as in covenant with God. —He may wish to have his children baptized, and his conduct be such, in other respects, as to make it evident, that he does not keep covenant with God. He may be *immoral*, neglect *sabbaths*, *sacraments* and many other plain duties ; which would demonstrate, that he did not regard God's covenant. Now, inasmuch as baptism, both adult and infant, is designed as a public token that the dedicator does keep God's covenant, or is in good covenant standing, so it is requisite, to qualify an infant or child for baptism, that its owner and proprietor, or he who dedicates it, should be in complete covenant-standing. On this, the propriety of administering baptism to any infant depends. This, I apprehend, is what the apostle Paul designed to teach us, in what he says, relative to the unbelieving husband and believing wife, &c. 1 Cor. vii. 14. "*For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband ; else were your children unclean ; but now are they holy.*" By being *holy*, in this place, cannot be intended *internal* or *inherent* holiness ; but that ho-

liness is meant, which arises from *dedication*. Either of the parents being in covenant or a believer, prepared the way for and was absolutely necessary, to their children being considered as *dedicated* to the Lord.

BUT the very nature and design of baptism, teaches us, with sufficient clearness, that being completely in covenant with God, must be one thing which is absolutely requisite, in a *parent* or *dedicator*, that the way be prepared for the baptism of any child. This is an essential qualification; for it is designed as a token of this very thing.

ON the whole, therefore, when a child is offered for baptism, in order to its being determined, whether it be a properly qualified subject, two things only must be determined.

1. THAT the child offered doth belong to him who offers it; and that he has the controul and disposal of it, in distinction from any other person.

2. THAT the person offering it be a believer; or in good covenant standing.

## S E C T I O N V.

*Showing, how far the institution of God, extends the right of Infant Baptism.*

VERY different opinions have been entertained, not only relative to the end and design of baptism and the qualifications for it; but as to the *extent* of its administration.

THE church of *Rome* and the established church of *England* have endeavoured, to extend the administration of baptism, especially to infants, as universally as is possible, by the introduction of *sponsors* and *god-fathers*, in the place of *parents* and *proprietors* of children; although God has authorized, yea, restricted the dedication of children to the latter. Some have

even asserted, that *all* children, that are born under the gospel, are to be baptized ; whether they be connected with covenant and believing parents or not. But such an opinion must arise, from inattention to or misconceptions of the end and design of the ordinance of baptism.

THE observations which have been made, relative to the design of baptism, and, in the last section, relative to *that* which qualifies an infant for it, I think, will lead to the following conclusion, as to the extent of its administration ; viz. that it is restricted, by divine institution, to the children of believing parents or masters. If infant-baptism, in connection with a parents own baptism, be designed, as a token of the parents compliance with the covenant of grace, and hath no respect to the infant baptized, excepting, as being the child or property of the believing parent, then, infant-baptism cannot be extended, further than to the children of such parents and proprietors. God has from the beginning, required men to dedicate and devote *all* they have to him : and he early appointed a public mark and token of such a dedication : viz. the circumcision of the adult and such children as belonged to him. Thus far a man's covenant can go and it can be extended no farther ; for he cannot covenant and dedicate *that* to God which is not his *own*, in distinction from other men : and, thus far the *token* of the covenant originally extended, and it could extend no further. It was a *full* expression of Abraham's compliance with the covenant, that he dedicated himself and such children as belonged to him, to God. God required no more of him, than what was implied in that. In doing that, he went as far as he had either a *natural* or *instituted* right to go. The administration of infant baptism, must, therefore be restricted to the children of covenant or believing parents. If *that* which qualifies any infant for baptism were pointed out in the last section, it will certainly follow, that the children of covenant

or believing parents only, are the proper subjects of it. If it be requisite, that the infant offered for baptism, be the *child* or *property* of him who offers it, and, if he who offers it must be full in the covenant, then it is certain, that the children of covenant persons only can, consistently with the institution, be baptized. It is certain, I apprehend, that Abraham was not authorized to extend circumcision any further: and the *Jaylor* considered his obligations to be restricted to himself "and all his." Acts xvi. 33. It must arise, therefore, from mistaken apprehensions of the end and real design of infant-baptism, that any have attempted to render the administration of it more universal.

It may serve to confirm what is now advanced, relative to the *extent* of the right of infant-baptism, if the various *objections*, which have been raised against such restrictions be attended to and obviated.—I shall, therefore, take notice of *those*, which appear to me to be the most weighty and popular: and attempt to obviate them.

OBJECTION I. IT may be said, that other children are as good by nature, as the children of believers or covenant persons: there is no reason, therefore, why baptism should not be administered to one as well as another.

ANSWER. IT is readily acknowledged, that *all* children are alike good, by nature; yet the objection proceeds upon mistaken apprehensions, relative to the ordinance of infant baptism. It supposes, that baptism is designed, as an indication and token of the *goodness* of children, whereas it is only a *token* of what the *parent* is;—that he keeps God's covenant. There may be a good reason, therefore, why some children should be baptized and not others; for although children are *equally good* by nature; yet, there may be a very great difference, as to the *covenant-standing* of their parents. The parents of some may be believers and in covenant with God; but the parents of oth-

ers may be *infidels* and *grossly immoral*, and have no pretences to a covenant relation to God. As infant baptism is designed, as a token of the good *covenant standing* of parents, so there arises, from thence, a good reason, yea, a necessity, for restricting the administration of baptism to the infants or children of covenant persons; although all children are alike good by nature.

OBJECTION II. If all children are equally good by nature, and there is any *advantage* arising from infant-baptism, it would imply a criminal *partiality* in God, to suppose he restricted it to some, to the exclusion of others.

ANSWER. THIS objection proceeds, also, upon mistaken apprehensions, as to the *primary* design of infant-baptism; for it supposes the original design of baptism as it respects infants, was the bestowment of some peculiar blessings and advantages; whereas, it appears from what has been said, the original design of it was, to be a *token* of a parents *keeping covenant* with God,—to institute a way, in which, *proprietors* of children might *manifest* a compliance with the covenant.

BUT, if the design of it were to secure some good to children, would it imply criminal *partiality* in God, to restrict the administration of it to some children, because all children are alike good by nature? Is not one nation as good by nature as another; yet, doth not God give the *gospel* to one and not to another? Although *Jacob* and *Esau* were, by nature, alike good, yet, did not God chuse *Jacob* and reject *Esau*? And may not God bless some children, out of respect to the piety of their parents? was it not, out of respect to Abraham, that God conferred many blessings on the Jews, his posterity? Such an objection, therefore, as the present one, in every view of it, proceeds from misapprehension and mistake.

OBJECTION III. THE children of those, who are not in covenant, may have a christian education as well

if not better secured, than if their parents were believers and in covenant with God : and so there may be, as great a propriety in their being baptized, as though their parents were really in covenant.

ANSWER. THIS objection proceeds upon the supposition, that the end and design of the baptism of infants, is a good *education* : and it has very often been considered in such a point of light. It was from such mistaken apprehensions of the end of that institution, that *Sponsors* have been introduced, as a kind of security, to make promises, in the name of children, which no mortal can perform ; and then, let parents be what they will, baptism has been administered without any scruple. But all this proceeding arises from mistaken apprehensions of the end and design of infant-baptism. It was not designed, as a *token* of a security of a christian education ; but as a token of the covenant between God and parents or proprietors of children. This being the case, the ordinance is, in its very nature, restricted to the children of covenant persons ; let other children be under ever so great advantages, respecting their education.

OBJECTION IV. OUR Saviour says, Mark x. 14. *Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God.* From whence we learn, that little children are the objects of God's *benediction* ; and that even *heaven* itself will consist in part, at least, of little children : and, if that be the case, they are surely qualified subjects for baptism ; and so it ought to be *universally* administered to infants.

ANSWER. THAT the little children, spoken of in this passage, were not brought to our Saviour to be baptized, is evident, from the account given us by three evangelists : and that our Saviour did not baptize them is certain, for it is said, John iv. 2. that he " baptized not." Admitting what is asserted in the objection, that little children are the objects of divine benediction, and that the inhabitants of heaven

will consist, in part, of such children, can we from thence infer, that all little children, as such are to be baptized? Wicked men and infidels are also the objects of divine benediction; and doubtless, some of that character will be meetned for and admitted into heaven; but can we from thence infer, that wicked men and infidels are, universally, the proper subjects of baptism? The same mode of reasoning which is adopted, in the objection under consideration, will infallibly end in such conclusions. It cannot, therefore, be considered as having weight in it, as the whole seeming force of it is founded on the most absurd mode of reasoning.

OBJECTION V. IF it be the case, that infant-baptism is to be restricted to the children of covenant persons, and other children are excluded from it, then children must suffer for the sins of their parents.

ANSWER. How far children suffer, in the case mentioned in this objection, will appear, when we come to consider the advantages arising from infant-baptism. Admitting that they really do suffer greatly, through the sinful neglect of their parents, by being cut off from baptism, is it peculiar to this case? Children must of necessity suffer much, if their parents are *vicious* and *negligent* persons. It is a fixed and established law of nature, that they should suffer in many respects. If parents are *fraetious*, *passionate* or *intemperate*, their children must, of necessity, be subjected to many sufferings and trials. The *vices* of parents often involve their children in *poverty* and *disgrace*. The *ill example* of parents often ruins the morals of children. Children must, as necessarily suffer, if they have negligent and wicked parents, as wives do if they have bad husbands, as parents do if they have wicked children. If the children of parents, who are not in covenant, do suffer on account of the negligence and sinful conduct of their parents, by being excluded from baptism, it is not a singular case. The same objection has equal force,

when applied to almost every institution God hath established, either in the natural or moral world. All connections between parents and children must be broken up; or children will suffer, more or less, by the *vices* and *negligence* of their parents.

OBJECTION VI. CIRCUMCISION was administered to all the children of the Jews, without exception; therefore baptism ought to be administered to *all* children, under the dispensation of the gospel without distinction.

ANSWER. THE plausibility of this objection originates, from *partial* and *mistaken* conceptions of the people denominated *Jews*. They are considered, as a people consisting of church members and others, like other nations under the gospel dispensation; which is considering them in a very erroneous point of light; for they consisted *entirely* of the covenant people of God;—of those, who acknowledged God to be their God and submitted to all the institutions of his visible church and kingdom, whether they were strangers, or Jews by birth. This being the case, although all the children of that people were considered, as the proper subjects of circumcision, and were in fact circumcised, no more can be infered from it, than that *all* the children of *covenant* people, of *church members* were circumcised. Which is circumscribing the institution of circumcision, by the same limits, which have been considered, as the boundaries of the institution of infant baptism; for we can only infer, from thence, that it was extended to the children of believing or covenant parents.

It in the objection, it had been stated and proved, that not only the children of the Jews, but *all other* children were formerly considered as being proper subjects of circumcision, and were in fact circumcised, there would have been force in the objection: But, if the circumcision of the children of the Jews were the extent of its administration, it was restricted to the children of covenant people; for the Jews

consisted of church members, and composed the whole visible church of God. There is nothing advanced, therefore, in the objection, which militates against what has been said; for it states the same restrictions relative to the administration of infant circumcision, which have been considered as the limits of the administration of infant baptism; and, instead of operating as an objection to what has been said, affords a direct argument, in favour of restricting the administration of infant baptism, to the children of covenant and believing parents.

**OBJECTION VII.** If the administration of infant baptism be restricted to the children of covenant or believing parents and proprietors, then a great number of children will be heathens.

**ANSWER.** THIS objection merits a reply, more on account of its *popularity* than its real *weight*. It will be readily admitted, that if infant baptism be restricted to the children of those, who are in a complete covenant standing, and the state of the world should be as it is at present, many children will be *unbaptized*. But, baptizing *all* children would not remedy the difficulty; unless they be baptized agreeably to the institution of God. Children may be baptized, and yet be heathens in every sense of the word, in which heathenism is to be dreaded. Being baptized, doth not make infants christians. If baptism, which is designed as a token of the covenant standing of *parents*, were administered to an infant, whose parent is an heathen in practice, would that make a christian of it? It has been made evident, as I apprehend, that the baptism of an infant, together with a parents own baptism, is a *token* that the *parent* is in covenant with God; now, should this *token* be applied to an infant whose parent is not in covenant, would such an *irregular* procedure, take a child out of heathenism and make a christian of it? Is a *perversion* and *misuse* of divine institutions, a *scriptural* mode of making christians? K

THE truth, on the whole, is this. Persons will be heathens till they comply with the *terms* of christianity, whether they be baptized or not. They do not become christians, merely by assuming the *external badge* of christianity. Baptism is a *token*, that he who is active in it is a christian, but it does not make him such.

It is certainly reasonable, that *that* which was designed as a *token* of a *covenant relation* to God, should be appropriated to that use; and be applied, where there is evidence of the existence of such a relation, whether more or fewer be cut off from it. And as baptism is designed as such a token, and that respecting the *dedicator* only, so it appears from the very nature and design of the ordinance, that it must be confined, in its administration, to covenant parents and their children.

## SECTION VI.

*Wherein, the advantages resulting from baptism, are particularly considered.*

**T**HERE has been very different conceptions, in the christian world, of the advantages and blessings, resulting from and connected with baptism. Some, in their great zeal, have evidently considered it, as a *saving ordinance*, and the *dividing line* between those, who shall be saved and those who will perish. Hence we find, in the liturgy of the church of England, that at the burial of all deceased persons (the *unbaptized, excommunicated* and *suicides* being excepted) thanks are given to God, that it hath pleased him to deliver "this our dear brother from the miseries of this sinful world;" and "to take unto himself the soul of our dear brother, &c." And, it is further evident, from the same liturgy, that water baptism is considered, as implying *regeneration* by the spirit of

God. Hence, at every baptism, thanks are given unto God, "that this child is by baptism, regenerate;"—that "it hath pleased thee, most merciful Father, to regenerate this infant with thy Holy Spirit." And, it is, probably, from such conceptions of the advantages resulting from baptism, that so many have been led to *deify* and *idolize* that ordinance, when, at the same time, they feel very indifferent relative to other religious institutions. We ought, without doubt, to esteem it as an important institution, as it originated from God; but we ought, on the other hand, to be careful and cautious of leading mankind to feel, as though all *religion* consisted in being baptized.

If the account which will now be given, of the *real* advantages of baptism, should not be such as some have conceived them to be;—or, if the ordinance should not appear to imply *every thing*, yet if it be represented as implying *as much* as the sacred scriptures attribute to it, it ought, at least, to give satisfaction to all.

If we carefully attend to the original institution of circumcision, we shall find, that it was not designed to introduce him, who was *active* in it, to a *real* title to the blessings of the covenant. A real covenant relation to God, or title to the blessings of the covenant, was supposed to exist, antecedently to circumcision; and circumcision itself was considered, only as a *token* of the *existence* of such a covenant relation. God ordered *Abraham* and other *adult believers*, to circumcise themselves and their children, in *token* of their faith and covenant standing. This, said God to Abraham, "*shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.*"—A token of a *pre-existing* covenant between God and Abraham. Hence, the apostle Paul, when speaking of Abraham's being circumcised, says; Rom. iv. 11. "*He received the SIGN of circumcision, a SEAL of the righteousness of the faith, which he had YET BEING UN-CIRCUMCISED.*" The circumcision of Abraham was, therefore, a *token* of an interest which he had in the

covenant, while he was *uncircumcised*. Circumcision created no new title; it was only a *mark* and *token* of a *pre-existing* covenant relation to God. The design and purpose of an adult's offering himself and children to God in baptism, must be, therefore, to *signify* his covenant relation to God, and not to *create* and *form* such a relation. God never made more of it, than a *token* of an *existing* covenant. It must imply, therefore, very unjustifiable conceptions of the *design* of baptism, to infer from it any *new* title to new covenant blessings: for a *title* to such blessings is supposed actually to exist, relative to the adult, antecedently to the administration of the ordinance, as the administration of it was designed, as a *token* of the *existence* of the covenant, between God and the baptized adult. If an adult, or parent were not *really* entitled to the blessings of the covenant, previously, or at the time of baptism, he was not in consequence of it; for baptism did not *create* such a title. It is designed, only as a *token* that such a relation doth exist. We may from thence conclude, with the utmost certainty, that baptism is not *that* which *saves* mankind. It is "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh"—It gives, of itself, no *new* title to covenant blessings.

WE must conclude, therefore, that a *title* to the blessings of the covenant of grace, is not an *advantage* which results from baptism. God commands and directs believers to attend upon that ordinance, as a *token* of their actual compliance with the covenant, and in testimony of it; and so the administration does suppose in it, an *antecedent* and *pre-existing* title to the blessings of it, in the view of God.—Consequently,

I. BELIEVERS, offering themselves and their children to God, in baptism, may be said to be, "the answer of a good conscience towards God."

THE apostle Peter thus expresses it. When speaking of baptism, he says, it is "*not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but* THE ANSWER OF A GOOD CONSCIENCE TOWARDS GOD." 1 Pet. iii. 21. The mean-

ing of which expressions must be this ; that, by being baptized, a person doth not become really more *holy* ; but by attending to it, he keeps a good conscience, as he complies with a special instituted duty. God has commanded a believer, to dedicate himself and his children to Him. A believer, in doing so, obeys God and so keeps a "good conscience." Dedication itself is a *moral* duty ; signifying it in baptism, is a *positive* institution ; and the believer in submitting to it, therefore, does that which is answerable to a good conscience.

2. I WOULD further observe, that a believer, in dedicating himself and children to God in baptism, not only answers a good conscience towards God, but, other things being equal, his real covenant relation to God does, thereby become open and visible to men.

BAPTISM is designed as a *token* of the covenant between God and the believer ; so that the *title* which he had, in the sight of God, becomes *open* and *visible* to men, by a regular submission to it. His *real* covenant title, in the view of God, is the same before as it is after baptism ; but in being baptized, other things being equal, his title becomes open and public. To him are "committed the oracles of God." That is, he has now an *open* and *visible* right, to all the blessings and privileges of the visible church. But then, all that baptism does is this ; it is a public *sign* and *token* of a real title to new-covenant blessings ; which title had its existence, from that faith which the believer had, in the sight of God, while unbaptized ; but became open and visible to *men* by baptism ; which is the instituted token of faith.

It appears, therefore, that baptism doth not originate a title to the blessings of the covenant ; but it is a *token* of such a title. God directs believers, as a *sign* and *seal* of their faith, or keeping covenant, to dedicate themselves and their children by baptism. In doing thus, they answer a good conscience towards

God : and, make their real covenant standing, in the sight of God, open and visible to men : but in reality they have, in the view of God, in consequence of it, no new title to blessings.

THAT a covenant title is presupposed and implied in baptism, as it respects parents and adults, is further evident, from the uniform directions of the apostles. "*Repent and be baptized*" is an example, of apostolic directions. "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest," &c. Repentance and faith, were universally considered, by the apostles, as prerequisites and preparatives for baptism ; but repentance and faith imply, a real interest in the blessings of the covenant of grace.—Baptism therefore, cannot be considered as *that* which *creates* or *constitutes* new titles ; it cannot be considered as implying any thing more, than a preexisting title ; as it is only a *token* of an existing covenant, as it respects parents and adult believers.

As to the *advantages* resulting from baptism, respecting *infants* or *children*, I would observe ; that inasmuch as the original design and purpose of baptism was not to *create*, or *constitute* new titles to the blessings of the covenant, but only to be a *token* of *his* interest in the promises, who *dedicates* : and as no such interest was supposed or implied, relative to the baptized infant, in its baptism, so the infant or child cannot be said to have such an interest or title to the promises, in consequence of baptism. If the *natural offspring* of believers be not, as such, interested in the blessings of the covenant, antecedently to baptism : and if baptism do not *constitute* and *create* such an interest, then no such interest in the blessings of the covenant, can be infered from an infants being baptized.

BAPTISM is not the "answer of a good conscience," in the infant which is baptized ; for it has no consciousness of any part of the transaction. And, it is not designed as a token of any *title*, which it had to the blessings of the covenant, previously to its bap-

tism; for no such title existed; as appears from what has already been said. Consequently, no interest, in the blessings of the covenant, can be infered from its baptism.

It cannot be supposed, that baptism should be more efficacious, as it respects an *infant* which is altogether *passive*, than to the *parent*, who alone is *active*: and it *creates* no *new* titles relative to the latter; it is only a *token* of a pre-existing interest in the covenant. But, as to the infant, no such *pre-existing* interest can be signified, because it did not exist.

It appears evident, not only from the end and design of baptism, that we are not to infer, that an infant hath a title to the blessings of the covenant, from its being baptized, but the scriptures otherwise teach us the same truth. It is evidently the case, that the Jews supposed, in our Saviour's day, that they were eminently distinguished from other people, as being entitled to peculiar blessings, on account of their being natural descendants from Abraham and circumcised. But Christ taught them, that if they expected to receive the blessings, which were conferred on Abraham, because they were his natural descendants and had been circumcised, they were under a fatal mistake—That in order to Abraham's being their father, in that sense, they must do the "works of Abraham." \* And John the baptist cautions the Jews in these words "Think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father." † As if he had said, away with all your flatteries, on account of your being circumcised and natural descendants from Abraham.

THAT God does not consider the children of believers and covenant parents, as having a title to the promises, is evident from his dispensations towards the children of his servant *Isaac*. His conduct, in choosing one and rejecting the other shows, that he

\* John viii. 33—39.

† Math. iii. 9.

considered himself as having a sovereign right, to give or withhold blessings from them, as seemed good in his sight. Accordingly it is said, that he loved Jacob and hated Esau, "*that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth.*" † What shall we say to these things? "Is there unrighteousness with God? Would God have dealt in so sovereign a manner, if those children were entitled to the promises?—We must, therefore conclude, that baptism doth neither imply nor convey, to the baptized infant, any title to the blessings of the covenant of grace.

It may be asked, whether it be not implied, in Gods directing parents to dedicate their children to him, that if they do, he will receive them, and secure the blessings of the covenant to them?

ANSWER. If parents dedicate their children to God, in truth and sincerity, they do their duty, and God will accept of and reward them, as faithful and obedient servants. But we have no warrant for such a conclusion as this, that he will reward their obedience, by bestowing upon their children, a title to the blessings of the covenant of grace. God has directed believers to pray for Kings, for *all in authority* and for *all men*; but can we conclude, that if a believer does so, that Kings will be *good men*,—that evil rulers will be *faithful*,—and that all men will be saved?

BUT, that baptized children, as such, have no title to the blessings of the covenant, appears with sufficient clearness, from this single consideration; namely, That baptism never was designed to convey any new titles to new blessings; but was designed, as a token of the blessings to which the baptized were entitled previous to baptism; and the infants of believers, as such, had no such previous title.

However, it may here be observed,  
I. THAT the institution of infant-baptism is so framed, as that it has the most favourable tendency to

advance the good education and final salvation of such children, as are regularly baptized.

THE institution makes it necessary, that those who offer children in baptism, be such persons, as naturally care for the welfare of such children: for they must be *parents* and *proprietors* of children; not *strangers*, or those who have no interest in or feelings for their welfare.—Besides; those who dedicate children to God, are, from the very nature of such a transaction, under the most solemn obligations to teach such children their duty, and to enforce it by every motive and argument.—Farthermore, the parent who dedicates children to God is, by the institution, so connected with the church of Christ, as that its members are under most sacred obligations, to watch over and excite him to faithfulness in the discharge of his duty.—It may be added further; that he, who dedicates children to God, must be in covenant with God himself; and so he must be one, who has a covenant title to the quickening and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit; which, in the most effectual manner secures his fidelity.—From this view of the institution, we see, that it is so framed and composed, as that it has the most favourable *tendency* to advance the salvation of such children, as are regularly baptized; although there are no absolute promises of such an issue. God has, after all, the same *sovereign* right to chuse or reject such children, which he exercised in the case of Jacob and Esau.—Nevertheless,

2. THERE are some peculiar reasons to hope, for the salvation of such children, as are regularly baptized.

THIS appears, in part, from what was observed, under the last particular. It may further appear, from this consideration: namely, that if parents be faithful, and do their duty, there is hope that they may be successful. There is always more hope of

success, in a case where persons do their duty, than where they neglect it; although there are no absolute promises of success.—Besides, God is pleased, many times, to bestow blessings on others, out of respect and regard to his own friends and servants. If there had been but ten righteous persons, in the wicked City of Sodom, God would not have destroyed it “for ten’s sake.” Great blessings were bestowed on the Jews, on account of their connexion with Abraham, the friend of God. So God may do great things for children, out of respect to their pious and faithful parents. But then, there are no promises implied in their baptism, by which such blessings are absolutely secured; as appears, I trust, from what has been said. Indeed, it is declared, “that all things shall work together for good, to them that love God;” and, doubtless, God will over-rule and order the circumstances of their children, in such a manner, as shall answer good purposes to them; but whether that will be in chusing or rejecting them, no one, excepting God, can determine.

WE must, therefore, come to the following conclusions, as to the *advantages* arising from infant baptism. On the one hand, that the institution is so framed, as that it has the most favorable *tendency* to advance the religious instruction and education of such children as are baptized; and affords, some peculiar reasons to hope for their salvation. Yet, I trust, it must be evident, that there is no absolute *security* of the blessings of the covenant of grace, either *external* or *internal*. The design of baptism, is not to *create* titles, but to be a *token* and *sign* of the interest which those have already, in the covenant, who are *active* in the dedication.

SOME may object to this representation, of the advantages resulting from infant baptism, and say; that if the case be thus, parents have no *motive* or *encouragement* to dedicate either themselves or children in baptism;—the whole is a mere *nullity*.

To which I would answer. It is certainly a mat-

ter of very great importance, that baptism be attended to in a serious and strict manner, if the case be as has been represented. It is true, indeed, that parents, cannot, from thence, sit down easy and conclude, that they have no more to do, because their children are baptized ; and that now they will certainly be saved. It is also true, that baptized children cannot conclude, according to what has been advanced, that all is well with them, because they have been baptized ; that they have every thing secured, without their concerning themselves about religion. And God would have all occasion for such flatteries removed, completely out of the way. " Think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father."

BUT then, there are the most solemn *motives* and *considerations* to enforce the institution of baptism ; such as have the greatest weight, in the view of all good men. God has commanded men, to witness their compliance with the covenant, in this way ; and God has a right to be obeyed. Baptism cannot be neglected, therefore, without a great degree of criminality ; even if persons could not discover a single advantage, arising immediately from it, either to themselves or to their children.

THE conclusion, that baptism is a mere *nullity*, according to the foregoing representation of its advantages, is, also, without any reasonable foundation. It certainly is not such, as it respects the visible kingdom of Christ. It is, as it respects adults, a public *token* of their covenant relation to God ; and of their right to the privileges of Christ's house and family.—Besides ; it is not a *nullity*, as it respects those, who dedicate themselves and children to God ; for they, thereby, discharge an important duty, and " answer a good conscience towards God."

NOR is baptism a mere nullity, as it respects *children* which are dedicated. They are devoted and consecrated to the service of God, by those, who had

right and authority to do it ; which dedication is binding upon them ; and, an interest in the blessings of the covenant of grace is suspended, upon their *actively* falling in with such a dedication, as the only condition.

ON the whole, and to conclude the enquiry under consideration. If the foregoing reasonings be just, we must conclude, that as to an *adult*, who dedicates himself and children in baptism, he thereby " answers a good conscience towards God," as he discharges a duty which God hath enjoined on him. And, although his *real* title to the blessings of the covenant be the same, in the sight of God, after baptism, as before, as baptism was not designed to *create* titles, but to be a *token* of such as already exist ; yet, it serves as a public token of his covenant relation to God, and of his being a disciple.

IN regard to the *infant* which is baptized ; as baptism had no respect to any interest in the covenant, which it had previously to its administration, so it was not designed as a *token* of such an interest ; and, as baptism doth not *create* an interest in the covenant, so, in consequence of baptism, no such interest can be considered as existing. Nevertheless, the institution is so formed, as to have a most favorable *tendency* to advance the good education and salvation of the dedicated child ; although there be no absolute *security* of it. If the end and design of the institution of baptism be considered, particularly, that it was designed as a *token* of a covenant relation *already* existing, and not as *creating* such a relation, I trust the foregoing conclusions must of necessity follow.

## SECTION VII.

*Wherein the standing of baptized children; as such, respecting the church, is particularly considered.*

**T**HAT there is some kind of connection, between the church and baptized children, has been generally, if not universally admitted; but what kind of connection it is, is a matter about which, there has not been a universal agreement. Some have supposed, that baptism in infancy, introduces the infant, to a *complete* personal standing in the church of Christ. Such a *complete* standing in the church, respecting baptized children, as such, was avowed by many of those divines, who wrote in defence of that resolve of the Synod, at *Cambridge*, which gave rise to the practice of *owning the covenant*. It is my design, in this section, to examine that opinion; and to inquire, whether we have any scripture evidence of such a *complete* personal standing of baptized children, as such, in the church of Christ? But it will be necessary, previously, to consider what is intended, by a *complete* standing in the church; and what *that* is, which constitutes such a standing.

By a *complete* standing in the church, the same thing must be intended, as by being a *complete* member of the church, and having a right and title to the privileges of it. Having a *complete* standing, in any community, must consist in being a member of it, and in having a *right* and *title* to its *privileges*. It does not consist in being bound to *subjection*, without a title to its *immunities*. The same must be intended by being in a *complete* standing in the church. It must imply, not only obligations to do *duties*, but a *title* to the *privileges* and *immunities* of the church.

It will be necessary to consider further, what *that* is which renders any one a *complete* member of the church? There can be no great difficulty, I apprehend, in determining what *that* is which constitutes

membership. Without any doubt, complete membership must be grounded on a complete standing in the covenant. Being in covenant is *that*, which gives a right and title to the blessings of the covenant. If a church consists of those, who have bound themselves by covenant to be the Lord's, and to be subject to Jesus Christ as King and Ruler, and to watch over one another; then, being *completely* in covenant must be *that*, which constitutes a complete standing in the church. It certainly is considered, in this point of light, by those who have been advocates for the complete standing and membership of baptized children in the church. Their supposed covenant standing is the pillar, which supports the whole fabric; for all the arguments, which are brought to vindicate the membership of baptized children, are founded on the covenant standing of such children. That this may appear, I shall take the liberty of referring the reader to a number of passages, taken from the Rev. Mr. WILLIAMS' "inquiry, concerning the design, &c. of christian baptism;" which contains extracts, from the reasonings of a number of antient divines, who have written in defence of the membership of baptized children. My design, in adducing those quotations, is simply to show, that a complete covenant standing has been considered as *that* which constitutes a complete standing and membership in the church. In that inquiry, p. 21, it is said, "to be in covenant, or to be a covenantee is the *formalis ratio* of a church member." In p. 23, the Rev. Samuel Stone, is quoted as saying, "it being granted that they (meaning the children of covenant parents) are in Abraham's covenant—they have membership by birth." In p. 28, the Rev. Mr. Norton, is said to reason in the following words, "confederation giveth the form of church membership; therefore, confederation maketh children church members." Page 30, contains the following quotation from the Rev. Mr. Pruden. "The children in question are

the children of such parents as are in covenant, and so members of the church."

FROM these quotations, it becomes very evident, that being in covenant has been considered, as that which constitutes membership and a standing in the church: and that the advocates for such membership, have considered such a standing in the covenant, as the foundation of their whole scheme. The complete membership of baptized children, therefore, rests entirely upon their being *completely* in covenant. If that be not the *real* state of baptized children, as such, the whole must fail. Doth not the complete standing and membership of baptized children, as such, appear then to have a very *doubtful* and *precarious* foundation: if it depends upon their being in covenant with God? It is certain, that baptized children, as such, have no interest or standing in the covenant, on account of any *personal* exercises, which they had, in the affair of their baptism; for they certainly knew nothing of the nature of the covenant: and, in every view of the case, they were *incapable* of any *activity* in the transaction. And the supposition, that they have any personal interest in the covenant, through the covenant transactions of their parents, or as being children of covenant parents, is, I conceive, contrary to the account which is given us in the sacred scriptures. Such a supposition, stands opposed to the caution and admonition which John the baptist addressed to the Jews; "think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father." And, I apprehend, it doth appear, from what has been offered to consideration, in the two first sections, that no such covenant standing was implied in, or signified by circumcision, even respecting the children of *Abraham*; for *Ismael* was circumcised, and, at the same time it was expressly said, that he did not belong to the *seed* to whom the promises were made. And the apostle Paul says, very expressly, that "they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the

children of God.' Besides, as it has already appeared, that circumcision, both adult and infant, was considered as a joint token of a *parents* covenant standing, and had no respect to the covenant standing of children; so, this must be the case as to baptism. It appears also, I conceive, that as no covenant standing was implied or presupposed in the baptism of infants, and none *created or constituted* by it, that baptized children, as such, have not a complete standing in the covenant, and so are not complete members of the church.

ARE we then to conclude, it may be asked, that baptized children, as such, have no standing in the church;—that they have no connection with it? If they have not a *complete* standing in it, and yet have any connection with the church, then they are *half way* members.

To which inquiry and reasonings, I would answer, If by a church be meant those, who enjoy an interest and title to the promises and blessings of the covenant of grace, then, baptized children, as such, are neither *half way* members nor members in full; for, I trust it appears, from what has been said, that infant baptism neither implies nor signifies, that the baptized infant is interested in the promises of the covenant, nor constitutes such an interest.—Nevertheless, there is a certain kind of connection, which all children, that have been regularly baptized, are in with the church, on account of which, the church is under obligations to respect them, in such a sense, as they are under no covenant obligations to respect other children. It is universally admitted, that the members of a church are not only in covenant with God, but with each other, to watch over one another; and to see to it, that each member walks agreeably to his profession, by fulfilling his covenant engagements. It is also a granted principle, that when parents enter into covenant with God, and dedicate themselves and children, that they covenant and engage to train

up their children in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord." The whole church, then, is bound, by covenant to see to it, that such parents perform their vows, relative to such children; and so is under obligations to have a special respect to them. The church is connected by covenant with the *parent*, and the *parent* with his baptized *children*; and in this manner, there is a connection through the whole. But the connection, which the church has with the baptized child, is a *mediate* one, and takes place through the membership of the parent and not of the child. The obligations, which the church is under, do not arise from any *claims* which the baptized child has upon the church: but from the covenant connection of the church with its parent. This, I apprehend, is all the connexion which the baptized child, as such, has with the church; and this is a connexion which is suited to its state; as it is not formed for *personal* transactions. This connexion secures its good education, as far as any connexion can secure it, by securing every mean which it is capable of enjoying, by being connected with the church, till it arrives to a state wherein it will be capable of acting for itself.

THAT this is all the connexion that baptized children have, as such, with the church, must appear, if what has been advanced, relative to the covenant standing of the natural seed of believers, be true; for membership, most certainly, depends on a standing in the covenant. If baptism in infancy do neither imply nor constitute such a standing, then the connexion, which has been just pointed out, is all the connexion, which such children have with the church, which is far from implying *membership* in it.

THAT this is the scriptural view, of the standing of baptized children, as such, will further appear, when we come to consider, the nature of that discipline which is to be exercised, by the church, respecting such children.

## SECTION VIII.

*Wherein it is more particularly considered, whether baptism in infancy do of itself, give a right to christian privileges in adult years.*

**I**T has been supposed, by some, that such children as were baptized in infancy, have a right and title, on account of their baptism, to christian privileges, in adult years, without making any *personal* or *explicit* profession of religion; yea, that requiring such professions, as a condition or prerequisite for the enjoyment of such privileges is, to say the least, without scripture-warrant. These conclusions originate from the idea, that infant baptism supposes and implies a personal interest and standing in the covenant, and complete membership in the church. If a covenant standing and membership in the church be not implied in infant baptism, it must be as necessary for those, who were baptized in infancy, to make a *personal* profession of religion, as a condition of enjoying christian privileges, in adult years, as for other persons. If, therefore, the things which have been advanced, particularly in the preceding section, be true, it will appear clear and evident, that a personal profession must be necessary to an admission to christian privileges, even respecting those, who were baptized in infancy. If infants are not to be baptized as being in covenant, and are not introduced into such a standing by baptism, then they cannot be considered, in consequence of their baptism, as being in a covenant standing, nor as members of the church. And it is apprehended, that each of those things are evident, from what has been already advanced.

We cannot, indeed, form any idea of the *personal* character of adults, from their having been baptized in infancy. We cannot, from thence, determine, whether they understand the nature of the covenant, or the design of christian institutions. Neither can

we, from infant baptism merely, determine any thing relative to the *faith* of an adult person; either as to the truths which are the *objects* of his faith, or the *kind* of faith which he has; or whether he have faith of any kind. We have no more reason to conclude, that an adult is right in all these respects, or to entertain that charity for him, which is the foundation of christian communion, because he was baptized in infancy, than if he had never been the subject of baptism.

BUT, without insisting on the last observations, that persons have no claims to christian privileges, in adult years, on the score of infant baptism, is obvious from the very *end* and *design* of the ordinance. It neither implied nor constituted an interest or standing in the covenant, and so neither supposed nor constituted the baptized child a member of the church; and if it be not a member, it certainly cannot claim the *privileges* and *immunities* of the church. Consequently, when the baptized child arrives to adult years, it is absolutely necessary, that he should make a *personal* profession, or enter *personally* into covenant with God, in order to his being a member of the church and enjoying christian privileges. If the end and design of baptism, and the things signified by it, have been rightly stated, these conclusions will necessarily follow.

SOME, perhaps, will say, by way of objection, to what is here advanced;—that if it be so, that circumcised or baptized children, have not a right to church privileges, when they arrive to adult years, without making a personal profession, why do we not find examples on sacred record, of such persons being called on to enter into covenant?

ANSWER 1. We do find, that the *whole* congregation of Israel were *frequently* called before God, to enter into covenant with Him.

ANSWER 2. THE objection, if admitted, will prove too much, more than can be supposed to be true. If

it will follow, that those who were baptized in infancy, have a right to christian privileges in adult years, without a personal profession, because we have no express example of such persons being called to enter *personally* into covenant with God, it will also follow, that such as were not circumcised or baptized in infancy, may partake of and demand such privileges, without a *personal* profession; for we have no express example of such persons being called upon, to enter into covenant. There were more or fewer *strangers* which sojourned with the Jews, and partook of their privileges; but we no where find, that they, in distinction from others, were called upon to make a *personal* profession. The objection, therefore, if it prove any thing, proves too much, and so destroys itself.—But,

ANSWER 3. A CONSIDERATION, which obviates the difficulty held forth in the objection, is the *plainness* and *explicitness* of the institution.

THE institution of circumcision, as to the end and design of it, was so explicitly revealed, as that a history of the practice of former times upon it, was unnecessary. The institution was particularly explained to Abraham. It was then, most clearly taught, that it did not imply or signify, that the circumcised infant was in covenant; for it was administered, by God's own direction, to *Ishmael* the son of Abraham, when God expressly said he was not of the *seed* which he promises respected. As an interest in the covenant was not supposed, but expressly denied, at the time when circumcision was administered, as in the case of *Ishmael*, the consequence is so evident, that after generations cannot need a history of the practice of former ages, to teach them that infant circumcision, and so infant baptism, do not imply membership in a church; and that membership must be afterwards formed, by *personal transactions*.

WITHOUT adding any thing further in this place, I shall presume upon it, as being sufficiently evident,

that if *personal* professions be necessary in any case, in order to the enjoyment of christian privileges in adult years, they are so in the case of those who were baptized in infancy.

## SECTION IX.

*Wherein, the Nature of that Discipline which is to be exercised, by the CHURCH, respecting baptized Children, as such, is considered and pointed out.*

**T**HAT some kind of discipline is to be exercised in the churches, respecting baptized children, has been very generally, if not universally supposed. Yet, there has been very different sentiments, as to the kind of discipline, which ought to be exercised; arising, very probably, from the different conceptions which have been entertained, of the *end* and *design* of infant-baptism, and the *standing* of baptized children.

THE obligations on Churches to exercise discipline in general, respecting baptized children, are not less obvious, on the supposition that such children do not enjoy a *personal* and *complete* standing and membership, than upon the supposition that they do.—A different kind of procedure, it is true, is dictated, by the former supposition than by the latter.

As baptized children, as such, have no immediate and personal standing in the Church, it being neither implied in nor constituted by their baptism, so, the Church hath no *immediate* concern with them, by way of discipline: but their dealings are *immediately* to respect their *parents* and *dedicators*. The parents or proprietors of such children have dedicated them to God, and are under explicit covenant obligations, to train them up for him. The whole Church is bound, by covenant, to watch over such parents, and to see to it, that they perform their vows; and in case they do not, they are to be considered and dealt

with, as for a breach of covenant in any other respect. This, it is apprehended, is all a Church can do, or has any authority to do. Inasmuch as baptized children, as such, have no immediate connexion with or standing in the Church, and are not known by it, in distinction from other children, excepting through the medium of their parents, so all the discipline it can exercise, relative to them, must be through the same medium. The discipline must *immediately* respect the parents; yet, *mediately* it respects such children as parents have dedicated to God, in baptism; and has a most important and direct tendency, to secure their highest good.

It may here be asked; If such children, as were baptized in infancy, become vicious and immoral, whether the Church, in that case, is to be as an unconcerned spectator and do nothing?

ANSWER. WITHOUT any doubt, there is something incumbent on the Church, in the case supposed, in the question. It is the undoubted duty of the Church, to see to it that the *parents* of such children are *faithful*;—that they exert all their authority and use every mean, to reclaim and reform their vicious children. The Church is also obliged to see to it, that such parents carry their discipline to the highest degree; and in case the assistance of the Church is desired and needed, it is in duty bound to assist a brother.

It may be inquired further;—what must be done in case a parent be unable, by the most faithful exertions, to reclaim a vicious child?

ANSWER. IT is the undoubted duty of a Church, in such a case, to inquire; whether a parent have been faithful, in the use of every requisite mean to reclaim such a child: and it is the undoubted duty of a parent, to make his *fidelity* appear to the Church: and if, in the judgment of the Church, the parent have been faithful, the Church must pronounce him such; but, if not, must censure and reprove him as

a breaker of his covenant. And, in case the Church shall judge such a parent to have used all the means in his power to use, and that till the case is become desperate, and there is no encouragement to use further means, it may declare a parent discharged, from his obligations to watch over such an incorrigible child; as the Church declares itself discharged, from any further obligations, to watch over an irreclaimable brother.

But, is not all this a *chimera*;—a plan which has its foundation in imagination only?—Let it be examined and it will appear,—

1. To be agreeable to the antient usage and practice of the Church, under the Jewish dispensation.

THE children, belonging to the congregation of Israel, were the children of *professing* parents: and what we find recorded, Deut. xxi. 18—21. teaches us how such children were treated. The words are these. *If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them. Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place: and they shall say unto the elders of his city, this our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones that he die.*"

UPON reading this passage, we can hardly avoid remarking the following things, respecting the discipline that was practised, in the church and congregation of Israel, relative to children; viz. That they were considered, as being under the *immediate* inspection and in the hands of their parents, to be re-proved and disciplined—That parents were to discipline and correct them, till they should prove themselves to be incorrigible, and manifest by their conduct, that further means or discipline would be fruitless—Then it was made the duty of such parents, to

bring their incorrigible child to the elders of the city; and to make their *fidelity* and the child's *obstinacy* appear. The elders of the city finding it to be all true, they with the whole congregation, were then to cut off the child and relieve the parent from his troublesome charge.—This representation of the practice and discipline of the Jewish Church, exhibits a plan exactly similar to that which I have pointed out.

2. THE mode of discipline, relative to baptized children, which has been suggested, is not only agreeable to the practice of the Jewish Church, but is peculiarly calculated to answer every purpose, which can be answered, by any kind of discipline whatsoever.

It is calculated to render parents very faithful, in educating and training up their children. Parents, on the plan under consideration, will see, that their children are in their hands: and must feel it to be their *immediate* duty to take care of them.—They will also see, that it is of the last importance to exert themselves to the uttermost; as, on the one hand, by their negligence, they will not only expose their children to ruin and destruction, and themselves to be censured as covenant-breakers, and to be cut off from all the privileges of the visible Church; but on the other hand, that the salvation and eternal welfare of their children, eminently depend on their faithfulness and activity.

THE mode of discipline under consideration, is not only calculated to render parents *faithful*, but in doing this, every thing will be effected, which discipline can accomplish, for the good of children. There are none, who are under the advantages that parents are, to educate and take care of children.—Their authority is early perceived and established. Children feel themselves to be more dependent on parents than on others; not only for present comforts, but for a future inheritance. Besides; children are sensible, that they are interested in the love

and affection of parents, in a peculiar manner : and parents can use more means with children, and to much better advantage, than others can. Parents are under advantages to watch over children, with much greater constancy, than it is possible that a church, or any of its members should do.

ON these accounts, I may venture to say, the mode of discipline under consideration, is much better calculated to answer good purposes, both to parents and their children, than any other plan which can be devised. — If a church can assist and aid the efforts of parents, they are by no means precluded, by what hath now been said. It is the undoubted duty of parents to ask the advice and seek the assistance of their brethren ; and the duty of brethren to afford it, when ever it is asked. — Instead, therefore, of its “cutting the sinews of discipline” to suppose, that baptized children, as such, are not *immediate* and *complete* members of the church, we see that there is abundant room for a discipline to be exercised, respecting such children, which is the most forcible and energetic.

3. AFTER what hath been said, it is almost unnecessary for me to observe, in support of the mode of discipline under consideration, that it is *exactly* suited to the *state* and *situation* of baptized children, respecting the church.

INASMUCH, as infant-baptism neither supposes nor constitutes any *interest* in the covenant, nor *membership* in the church, respecting the infant baptized, so it cannot be viewed as having any connexion with the church, excepting, through the medium of its parents. Therefore, dealing with such children through the medium of their parents is dealing with them, as being what they are, and on the ground on which they stand. Parents are *immediately* connected with the church, and the church with such parents ; — the *immediate* business of the church must be there.

fore, with parents; and the *immediate* business of parents with the children, which they have consecrated to God.

4. THE directions in the sacred scriptures, which respect *parents* and *children*, afford very great evidence, that the discipline under consideration is that which God designed should be exercised by his church, respecting baptized children.

ALL the directions which are contained in the sacred scriptures, relative to the education and government of children, are addressed immediately to parents, *"Ye fathers provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,"* exemplifies all the directions and exhortations which are given, respecting the education of children. On the other hand, the direction to children is *"children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right."* This is an example of all the directions given to children. This leads us, most necessarily, to this conclusion, that God has left children in the hands of their parents—their natural proprietors, to be taught and commanded; and has made it the *immediate* duty of children to be subject to their parents. The church is under obligations to see to it, that parents are faithful; but has no authority to deal *immediately* with their children. God has given to parents, the *immediate* right of commanding, and has made it the *immediate* duty of children to obey them.

ON the whole, does it not appear evident, that the mode of discipline, which has been proposed, is so far from being a mere *chimera*, as that it is conformable to the antient practice of the Jewish church;—is calculated to answer the most salutary purposes, both to *parents* and *children*;—is exactly adapted to the standing of baptized children respecting the church; and is alone reconcileable to the directions given in sacred writ, relative to parents and children? Is not a plan, which has such props to support it, highly recommended to our approbation?

FURTHERMORE, the view we have now had of the

mode of discipline, which the scriptures have instituted, relative to baptized children, affords additional evidence, that what has been advanced, relative to their *standing*, is agreeable to the scriptures; for the discipline directed to, is exactly suited to such a *standing*.

I HAVE attended to the several enquiries which were proposed, and should now relieve the patience of the reader, were it not, that a few remarks, arising from what has been advanced, merit some attention.

## SECTION X.

*Containing some useful inferences and remarks, arising from what hath been advanced, relative to baptism.*

THE sentiments which have been advanced, in the preceding sections, relative to the *end* and *design* of baptism, and the *state* of baptized children, will naturally lead to the following remarks and inferences; which I shall mention, with as little enlargement, as their importance will admit.

1. We may remark, from what has been said, the *principle* on which the *whole* institution of baptism is founded.

THE principle is this, that mankind are under obligations to dedicate all they have to God; and that this is essentially requisite to a compliance with the covenant of grace. An indication and token of such a dedication, is the design of the whole transaction; and at the same time, it is to be a standing token of the covenant between God and men. That men ought to dedicate all to God and to signify it, is the principle, therefore, on which the institution is founded.

2. ANOTHER inference and remark, which arises from what hath been advanced is, that the *mode* of baptism, instituted and practised, in the established

church of England, is wholly subversive of the real end and design of the institution.

IN the 29th canon of that church it is ordained, "*That no parent shall be urged to be present at his child's baptism, nor be ADMITTED to answer as Godfather for his own child ;*" which, putting the most candid construction on it, must mean, that no parent shall, by himself and of his own right, dedicate his children to God in baptism ; some other persons must unite with him in the transaction. On the other hand, if neither of the parents assist, in the dedication of their *own* child, yet, if some persons, who have no natural right to it will stand up as *sponsors*, it may be administered without any scruple. Now, all this procedure, wholly overlooks the leading principle of the institution, that it is the incumbent duty of parents to dedicate themselves and what they own to God : and that this is to be the token of the covenant between God and themselves. Now, taking children out of the hands of their parents and proprietors, and making it the business of other men, who have no natural right to them, to dedicate them, is directly opposed to the first principle and design of the institution. As baptism is designed as a token of dedication, so we are to offer our *own* and no others in baptism ; and he that presumes to go further, ventures to take a step, which *Abraham* himself was never authorised and never presumed to take. —I am sensible, that the canon on which we are remarking is now, in practice, very generally given up : but then, at the same time, another extreme, equally subversive of God's institution is substituted in its room ; which is, a universal administration of baptism to all infants : whether their parents or proprietors be personally and explicitly in covenant or not. The very design of infant-baptism is, to be a token of the *covenant* between God and the parent or proprietor of the child, which is baptized. *Abraham's* circumcising *himself* and those *children* that belonged

to him, was to be a *token* of the covenant betwixt God and himself. What propriety is there then, in baptizing children, whose proprietors are not in covenant? Is it not a perversion of God's institution? what authority has any man to administer *that*, which God designed as a public *token* of a *parents* covenant-*standing*, when at the same time, no such thing does exist. It must be, in its nature, a mere *nullity* and perversion of the institution.

3. We may further remark, from what has been said, the unreasonable nature of the *out-cry*, which is often made, when baptism is withholden from children—that it makes heathens of them, casts them out of covenant, &c.

IF what hath been advanced be true, infant-baptism doth not make children *christians*;—doth not introduce them into a covenant-*standing*. The fact is, they are not christians, personally, neither before nor by baptism.—They are dedicated creatures, but dedicated by their parents.—Parents who neglect to dedicate themselves and their children, make heathens of themselves: but they cannot make heathens of those, who were never christians; nor cast those *out* of covenant, who were never interested in its promises.

4. It may be further remarked, how very absurd it is, for parents, who are disqualified for dedicating themselves or their children to God in baptism, to urge the baptism of their children, by saying, that if *they themselves* are wicked and unworthy, their *children* ought not to be denied such a privilege.

It appears, from what has been said, that the very end and design of the institution of baptism forbids and stands directly opposed to such a plea. The design of infant baptism is to indicate, that the parents of such children as are baptized, are christians; or in covenant with God. If the parent, therefore, be a wicked man and not in covenant with God, the very *design* and *first principle* of the institution forbids baptism to his children. The parent *himself* stands directly in the way of its administration.

5. WE may further remark and infer, from what has been advanced, the *motives* and *views* which ought to influence parents, in offering their children in baptism.

THEY are not to proceed with a view, or under the notion of its making *christians* of their children, in itself considered. If, however, parents do regularly dedicate them to God, and be faithful in training them up for His service, they may indulge hopes of success; as in all other cases of obedience; yet, merely being baptized will not make them christians. Parents are not to seek baptism for their children, from any such views. They ought to do it in a way of obedience to God, and as a public testimony that they do comply with the covenant of grace.

6. FROM what has been advanced, baptized children may learn their obligations, to do something, in order to their enjoying christian privileges in adult years.

THEIR baptism in infancy did neither imply that they were christians, nor make them such. They are not to flatter themselves, therefore, of their having a right to christian privileges, or the name of christians, because they were baptized in infancy; nor as if it were less necessary for them to make a *personal profession* of religion in adult years, in order to their being *complete* members of the church, than if their parents had never dedicated them to God. Indeed, their obligations to it are, on some accounts, greatly enhanced. They have been, in fact, dedicated to God by their parents, who were authorised and under the most solemn obligations to do it. This being the case, although it were not an indication that they were christians, when they were dedicated; yet it binds them to be such; and their obligations *personally* to devote and *publickly* to give themselves to God, are indispensable.

## CONCLUSION.

I HAVE now attended, to the various things which were proposed, with as much conciseness, as I judged could consist with perspicuity. And, on a view of the whole, doth it not appear, that the bible does really hold up to view, *one consistent scheme*, relative to the ordinance of baptism? Particularly, relative to the *end and design* of it;—the proper *subjects* of the ordinance;—the *state and standing* of baptized infants;—and, relative to that *discipline*, which is to be exercised, by the church, respecting them?—The *end and design* of baptism is the *pole star* to direct us, through the whole process. If baptism, as it respects the adult and his children be designed, simply, as a token of the covenant betwixt God and the *dedicator or parent*; and not as a sign of any personal interest, that *infants* have in the promises, it will certainly follow, that the children of covenant parents are, alone, the proper subjects of baptism;—that the good *covenant-standing* of *parents*, is the qualification for the baptism of their children; without *knowledge, repentance, faith* or any qualification in the child;—that baptized children, as such, have no *personal* standing in the covenant, and are not members of the church; and so must have membership to form in adult years;—and finally, it will follow, that the discipline which is to be exercised by the church, relative to baptized children, cannot be *immediate and personal*, but must be through the medium of their parents. If the first principle, relative to the end and design of baptism be scriptural, I trust, the rest will follow, as necessary consequences.

It is very possible, indeed, that in pursuing the foregoing inquiries, which are perplexed with such a diversity of opinions, some inaccuracies and *immaterial* mistakes, at least, may have been made: if any such should occur to the critical reader, it is hoped, they may not operate to the disadvantage of those reasonings which are conclusive.—If any should reject the whole, merely, as standing opposed to their former sentiments and favourite opinions, from such no favour can be expected.

THE whole is now submitted to a candid examination; and left to the disposal of HIM, who is LIGHT and in whom there is NO DARKNESS at all.

FINIS.

# CONCLUSION.

I have now attempted, to the various things which were proposed, with as much conciseness as I judged could consist with perspicuity. And, on a view of the whole, I am not without some confidence that the reader will find up to a point, we are now arrived, relative to the ordinance of baptism, that the proper object of the ordinance, — the persons to be baptized, — is not that which is stated in the text, but that which is stated in the text, and which is to be excluded, by the church, respecting those who are not of the design of baptism. The text has no direct use, though the whole doctrine, if properly understood, the result and his conclusion, — the baptized, simply, as a token of the covenant between God and the church, and not as a sign of any personal holiness. We have in the text, as I have already shown, that the church of covenant persons are, alone, the proper subjects of baptism. — that the good covenant members of the church, without exception, are the subjects of their children; — that baptized children, as such, or any qualification in the child; — that baptized children, as such, have no personal standing in the covenant, and are not members of the church; and to have membership to form is what is to be excluded by the church, relative to baptized children, cannot be maintained, and reversed, but must be through the medium of the church. If the first principle, relative to the end and design of baptism be admitted, I trust, the rest will follow, as necessarily consequences.

It is very possible, indeed, that in pursuing the foregoing inquiries, which are perplexed with such a diversity of opinions, some inaccuracies and unwarranted mistakes, at least, may have been made; if any such should occur to the critical reader, it is hoped, they may not operate to the disadvantage of those reasons which are conclusive. — I say, however, that the whole, merely, as illustrating opposed to their own, or to the opinions of others, from such no lesson can be expected.

The whole is now submitted to a candid examination; and left to the disposal of men, who are honest and in whom there is no guile at all.

24 JUL 68